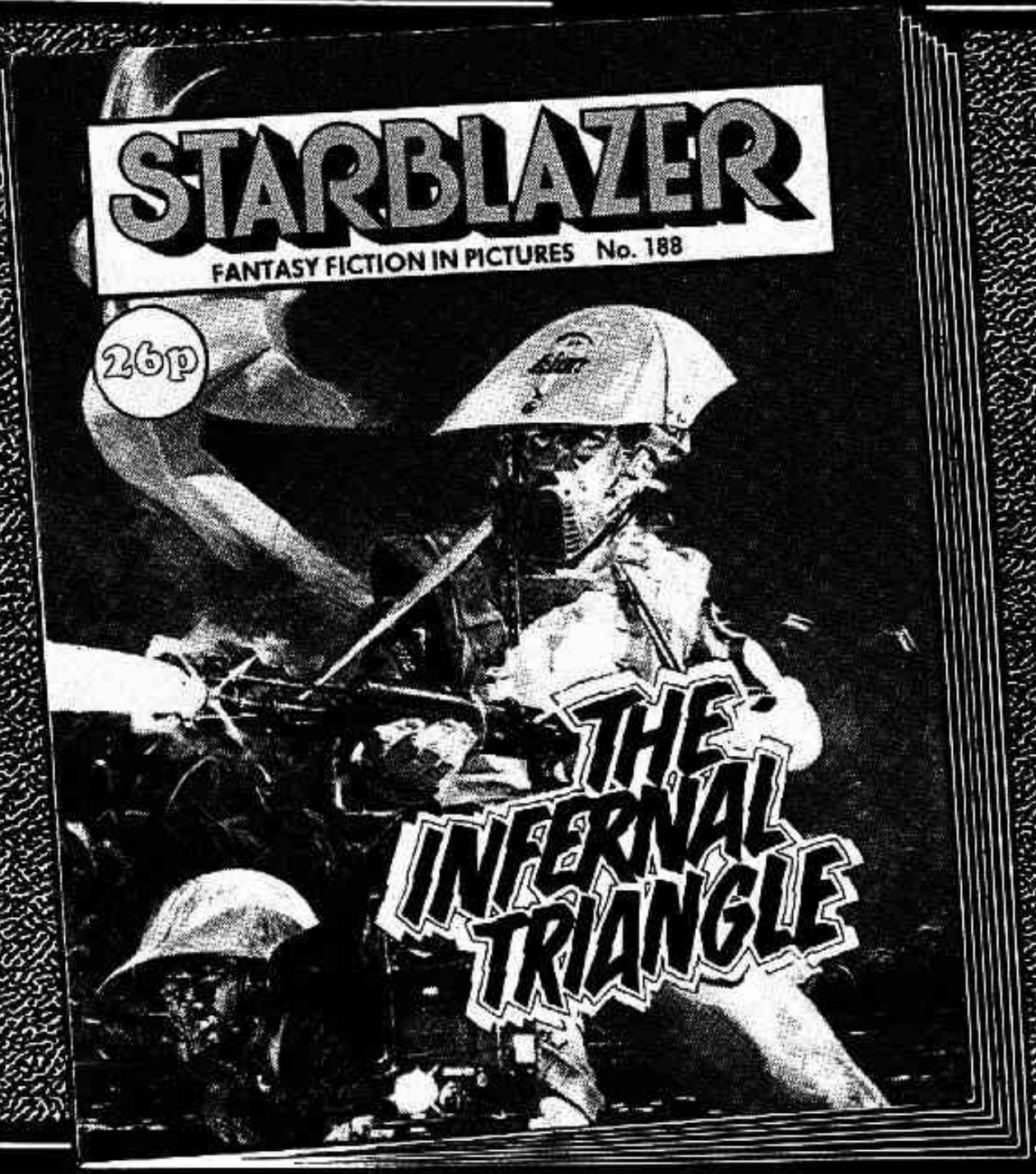
STARBLAZER

FANTASY FICTION IN PICTURES No. 189

26p

THE KILLING ZONE

DON'T FORGET THIS MONTH'S *OTHER*

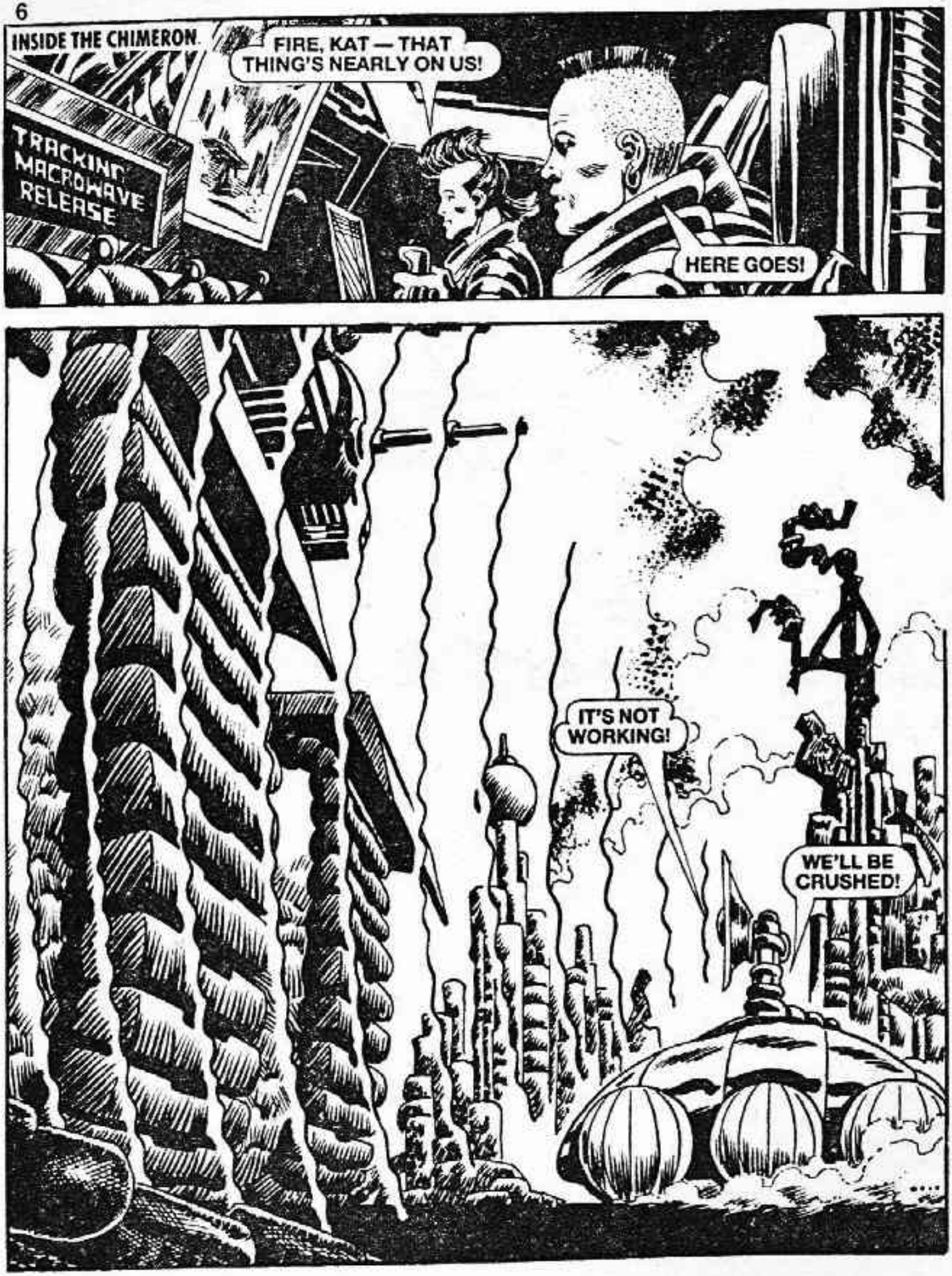


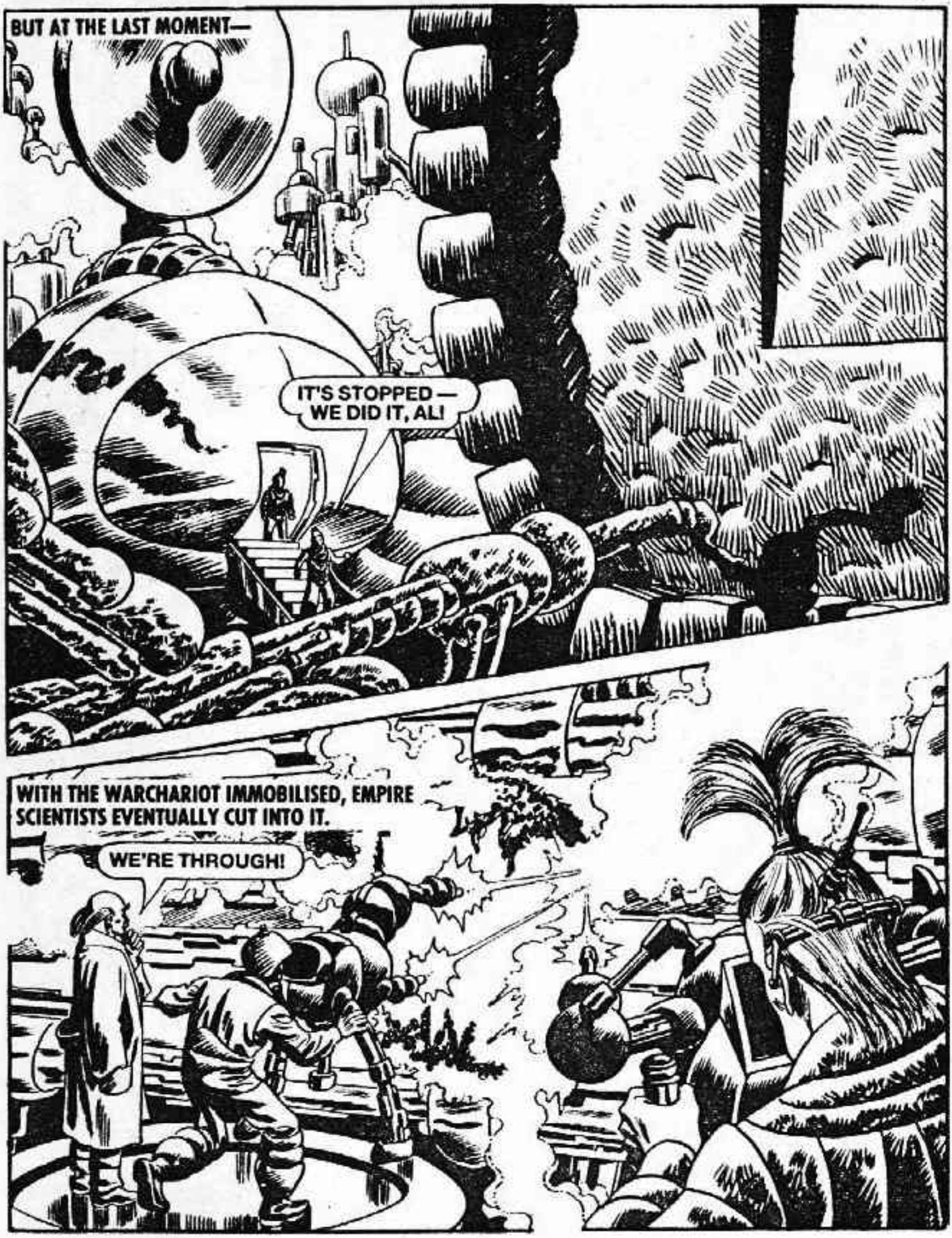
On sale at your newsagent's *NOW!*

THE KILLING ZONE

THE HUGE ALIEN WARCHARIOT WAS UNSTOPPABLE.
THE SECURITY ADVISOR COULD ONLY WATCH HELPLESSLY—
WHERE DOES IT COME FROM? AND WHERE IS OUR ARMY?

ALL OUR STARTROOPS ARE OUT IN THE BATTLE ZONE FIGHTING THE ZORIANS! WE HAVE ONLY A FEW VETERANS HERE ON EARTH.
N.Y.L.A., EARTH'S BIGGEST CITY, IS DOOMED UNLESS OUR LATEST WEAPON, THE ANTINODAL IMMOBILISING BEAM, IS READY IN TIME.
THE ANTINODAL BEAM WAS MOUNTED ON A MARK III CHIMERON TANK, CREWED BY ALARIC LEE AND KAT ROGAN, BOTH WAR VETERANS.
IT'S SO SMALL . . . WILL IT STOP THE WARCHARIOT?

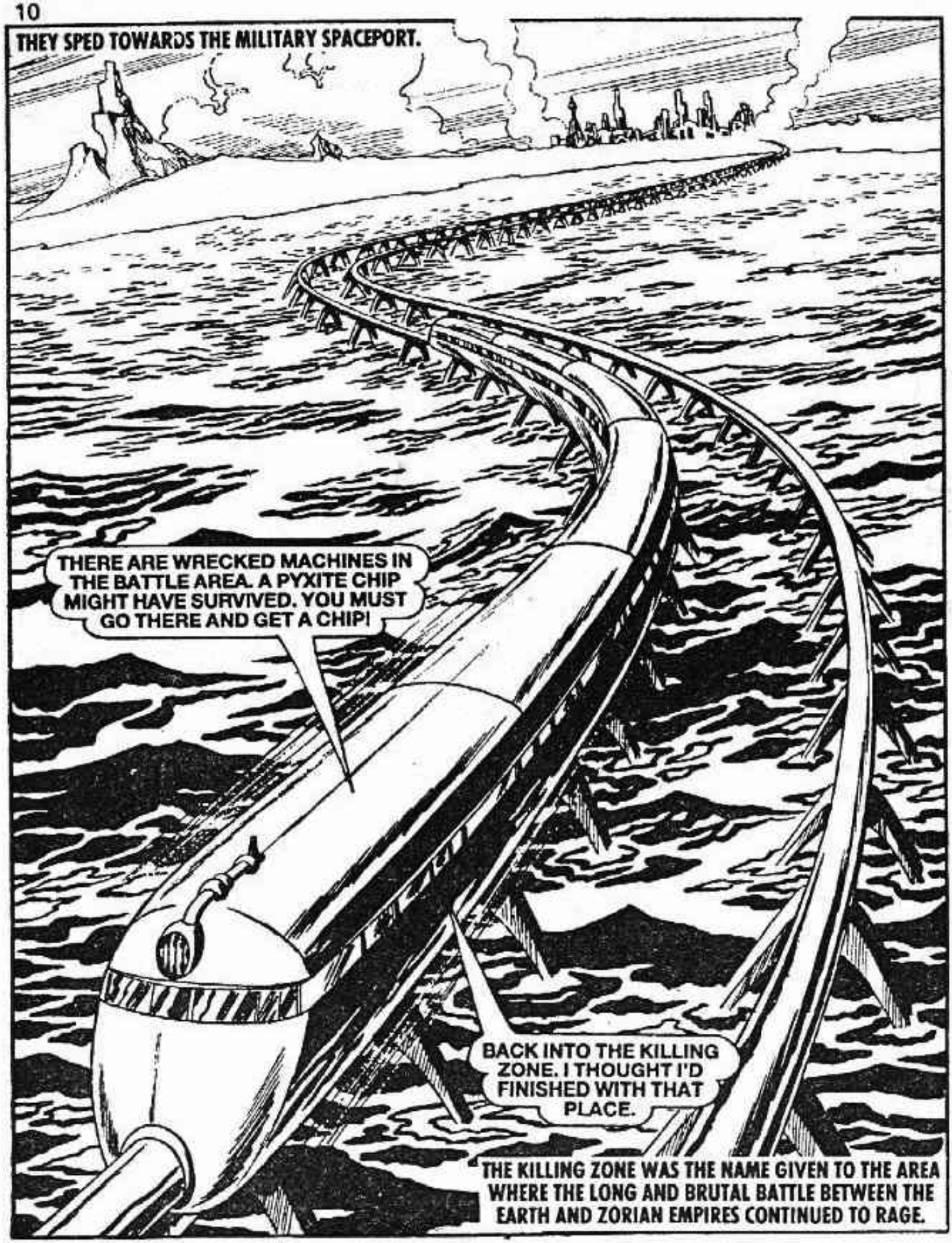

INSIDE THE CHIMERON.
FIRE, KAT — THAT THING'S NEARLY ON US!
TRACKING MACROWAVE RELEASE
HERE GOES!
IT'S NOT WORKING!
WE'LL BE CRUSHED!

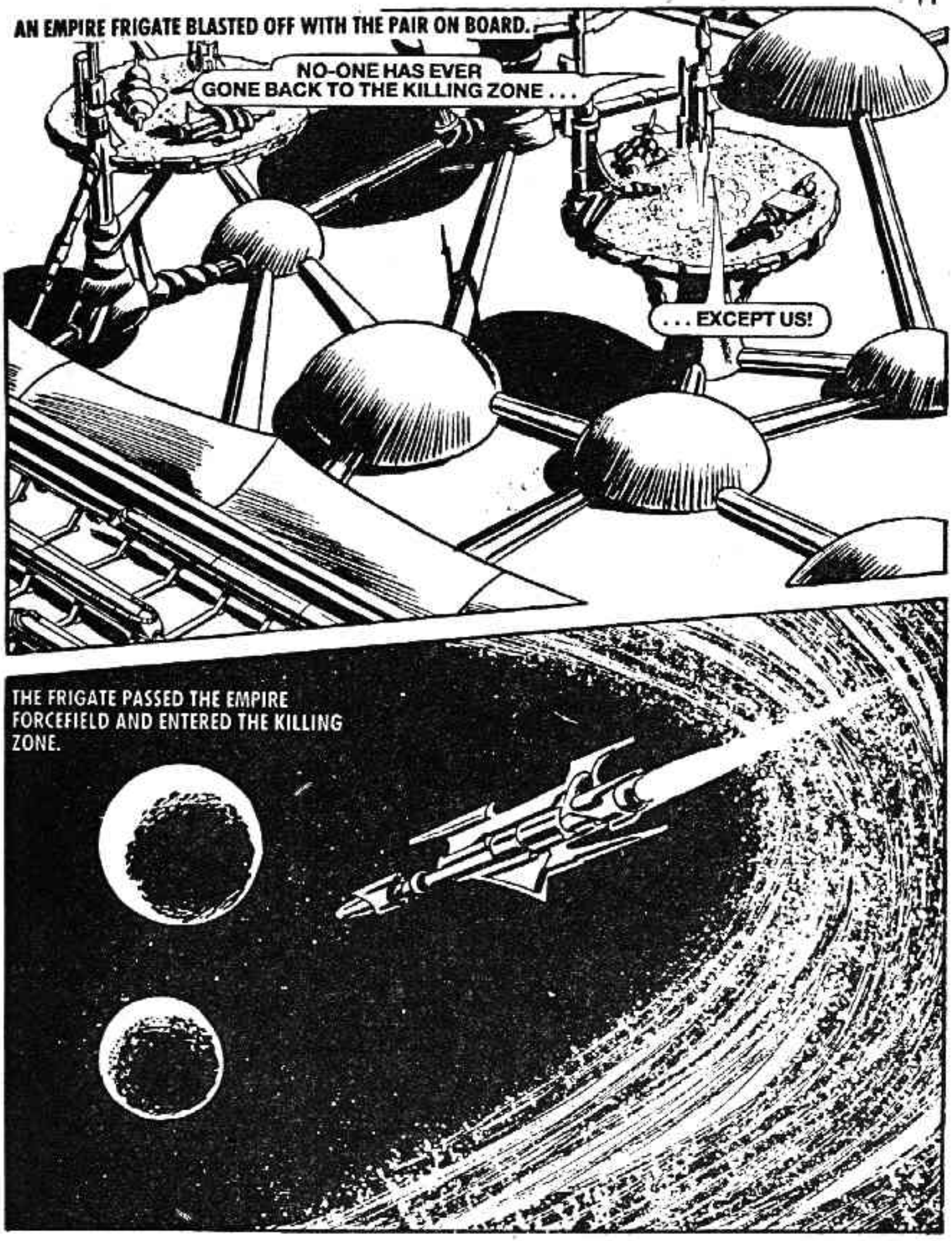

BUT AT THE LAST MOMENT—
IT'S STOPPED — WE DID IT, AL!
WITH THE WARCHARIOT IMMOBILISED, EMPIRE SCIENTISTS EVENTUALLY CUT INTO IT.
WE'RE THROUGH!

INSIDE THE VAST WAR MACHINE—
IT IS COMPLETELY AUTOMATED. IT HAS DEVICES TO COUNTER ALL OUR WEAPONS — INCLUDING SUPPRESSORS TO NEUTRALISE YOUR BEAM.
—SO THE ANTINODAL BEAM DIDN'T STOP IT!
THIS STOPPED IT! A MALFUNCTIONING PYXITE MEGACHIP, LIKE THOSE IN THE LATEST MARK IV MACHINES, MANUFACTURED FOR US BY THE VARDS ON THEIR FACTORY PLANET, MATRIX 5.
IF WE REPROGRAMME ITS COMPUTERS AND REPLACE THE PYXITE CHIP, WE COULD SEND THIS BABY BACK HOME . . .
. . . AND FOLLOW IT! WE WOULD FIND OUT WHERE IT CAME FROM.

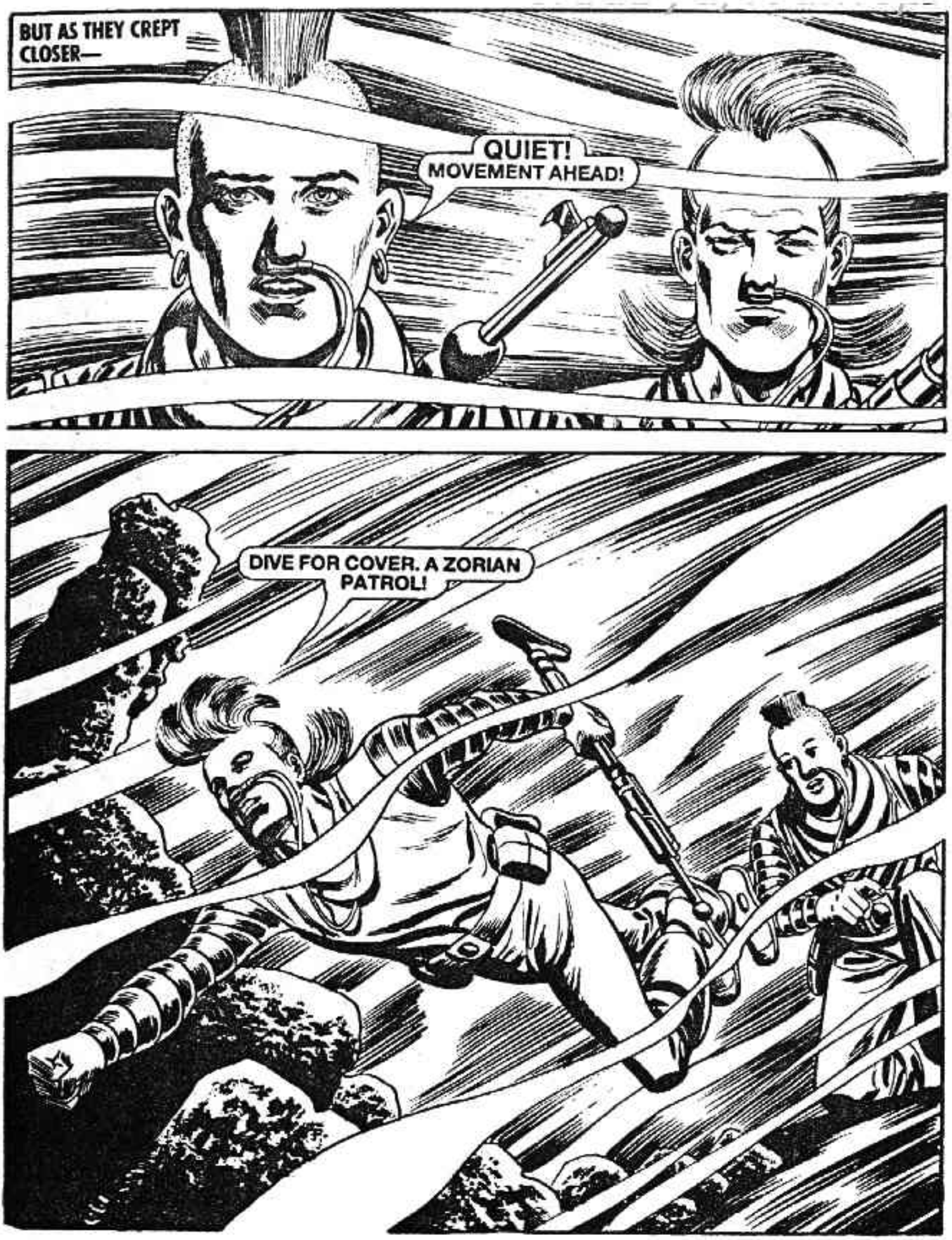
BUT IT WASN'T THAT SIMPLE.
YOU CAN'T FOLLOW IT! THE ONLY PYXITE CHIPS LEFT ARE IN OUR MACHINES CURRENTLY FIGHTING OUT IN SPACE.

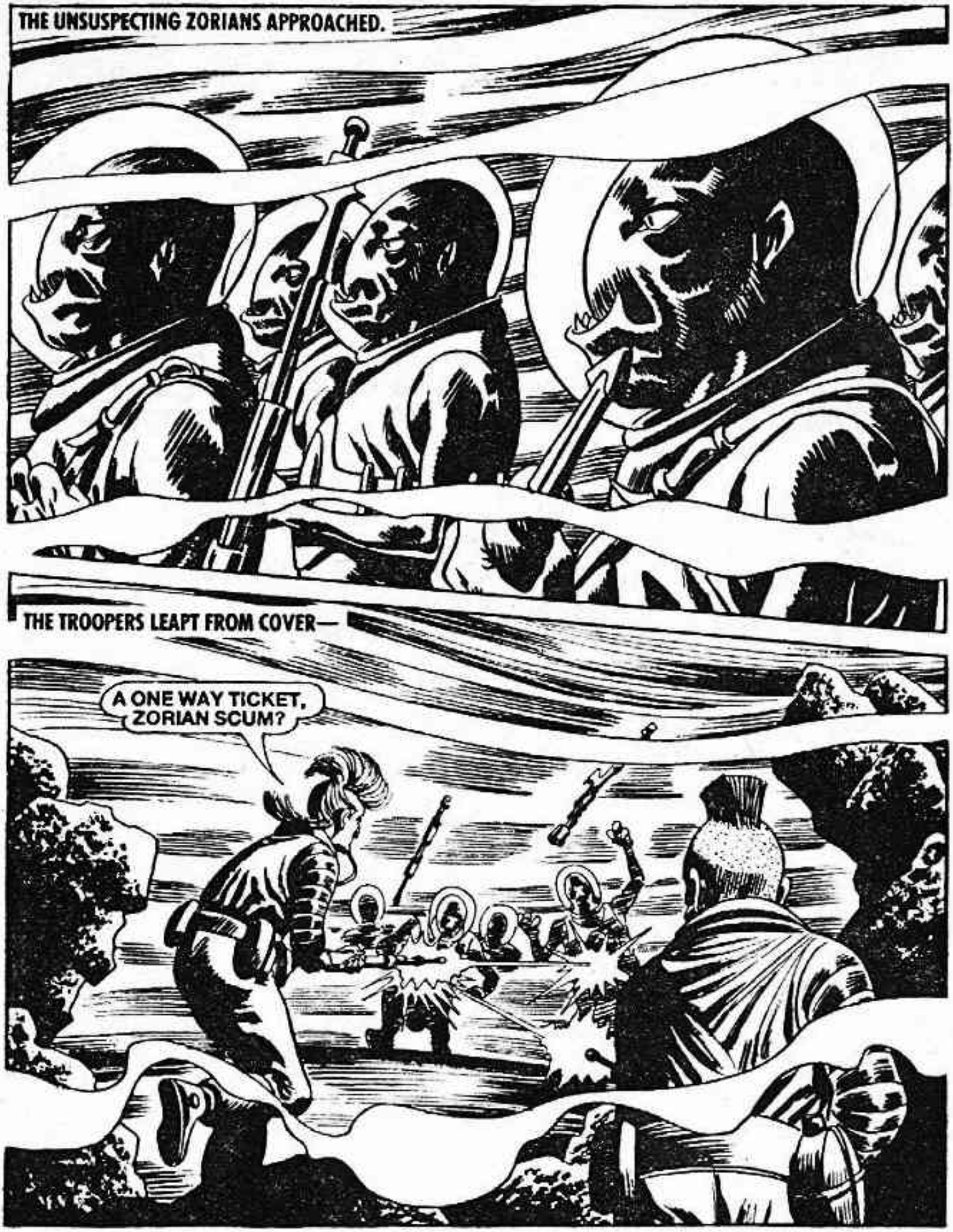
THE STARTROOPERS BOARDED A MONO-JET.
THE SITUATION IS DESPERATE. WARCHARIOTS HAVE LANDED ON EVERY KEY PLANET IN THE TERRAN EMPIRE. HOLD IT, THERE IS ONE ANSWER . . .


THEY SPED TOWARDS THE MILITARY SPACEPORT.
THERE ARE WRECKED MACHINES IN THE BATTLE AREA. A PYXITE CHIP MIGHT HAVE SURVIVED. YOU MUST GO THERE AND GET A CHIP!
BACK INTO THE KILLING ZONE. I THOUGHT I'D FINISHED WITH THAT PLACE.
THE KILLING ZONE WAS THE NAME GIVEN TO THE AREA WHERE THE LONG AND BRUTAL BATTLE BETWEEN THE EARTH AND ZORIAN EMPIRES CONTINUED TO RAGE.


AN EMPIRE FRIGATE BLASTED OFF WITH THE PAIR ON BOARD.
NO-ONE HAS EVER GONE BACK TO THE KILLING ZONE . . .
. . . EXCEPT US!
THE FRIGATE PASSED THE EMPIRE FORCEFIELD AND ENTERED THE KILLING ZONE.

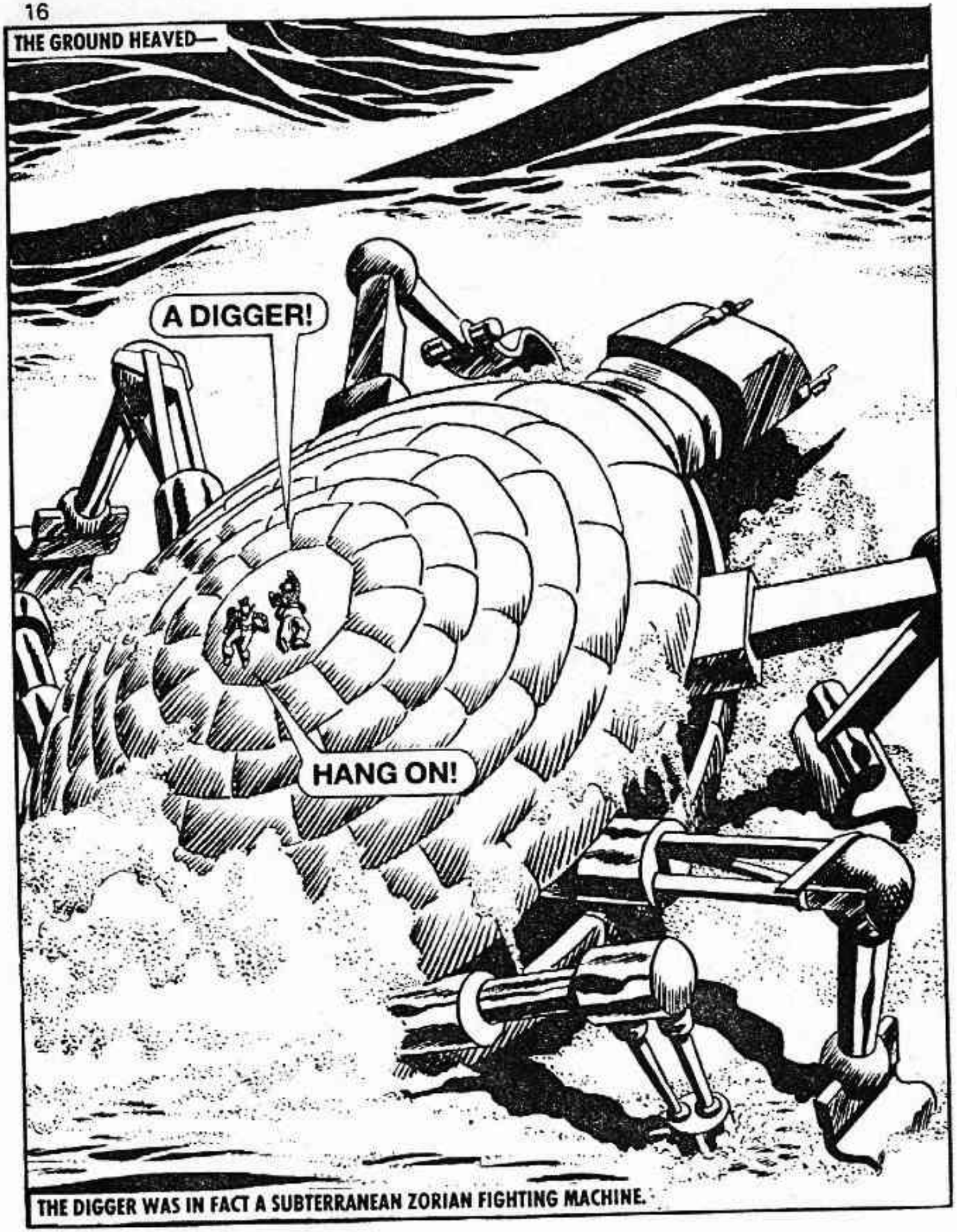
THEY REACHED THE BATTLEFIELD ON WHICH THE WRECKS LAY.
WE'LL FLY LOW AND DROP YOU IN PARABUBBLES.
THE PARABUBBLES WERE RELEASED.
AN EMPIRE SHUTTLE WILL RENDEZVOUS WITH THEM LATER.
PROTECTED FROM THE POLLUTED AIR OF THE BATTLEFIELD BY FILTER MASKS, THE PAIR LANDED NEAR A WRECK.
THIS WAY, KAT.

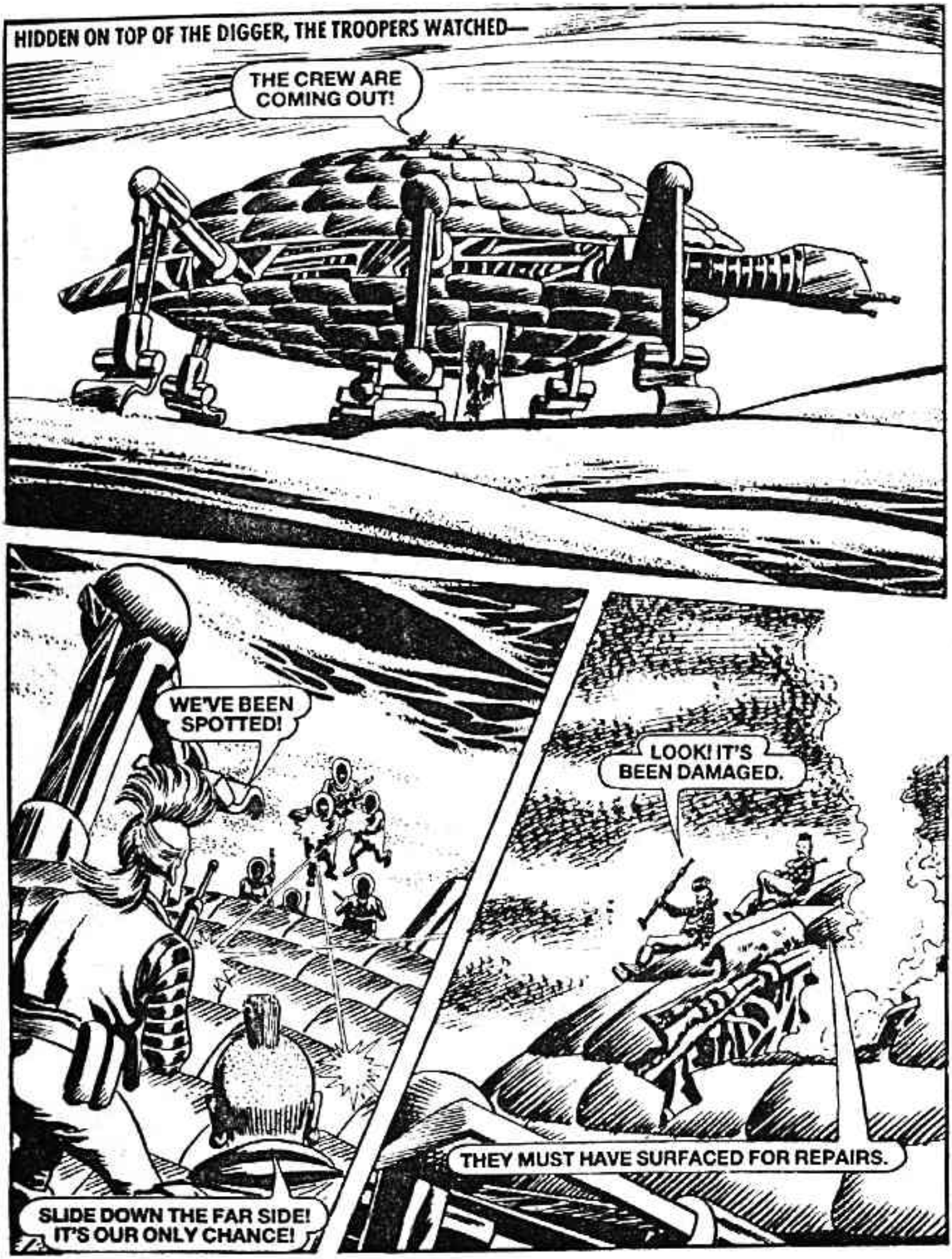

BUT AS THEY CREPT CLOSER—
QUIET! MOVEMENT AHEAD!
DIVE FOR COVER. A ZORIAN PATROL!

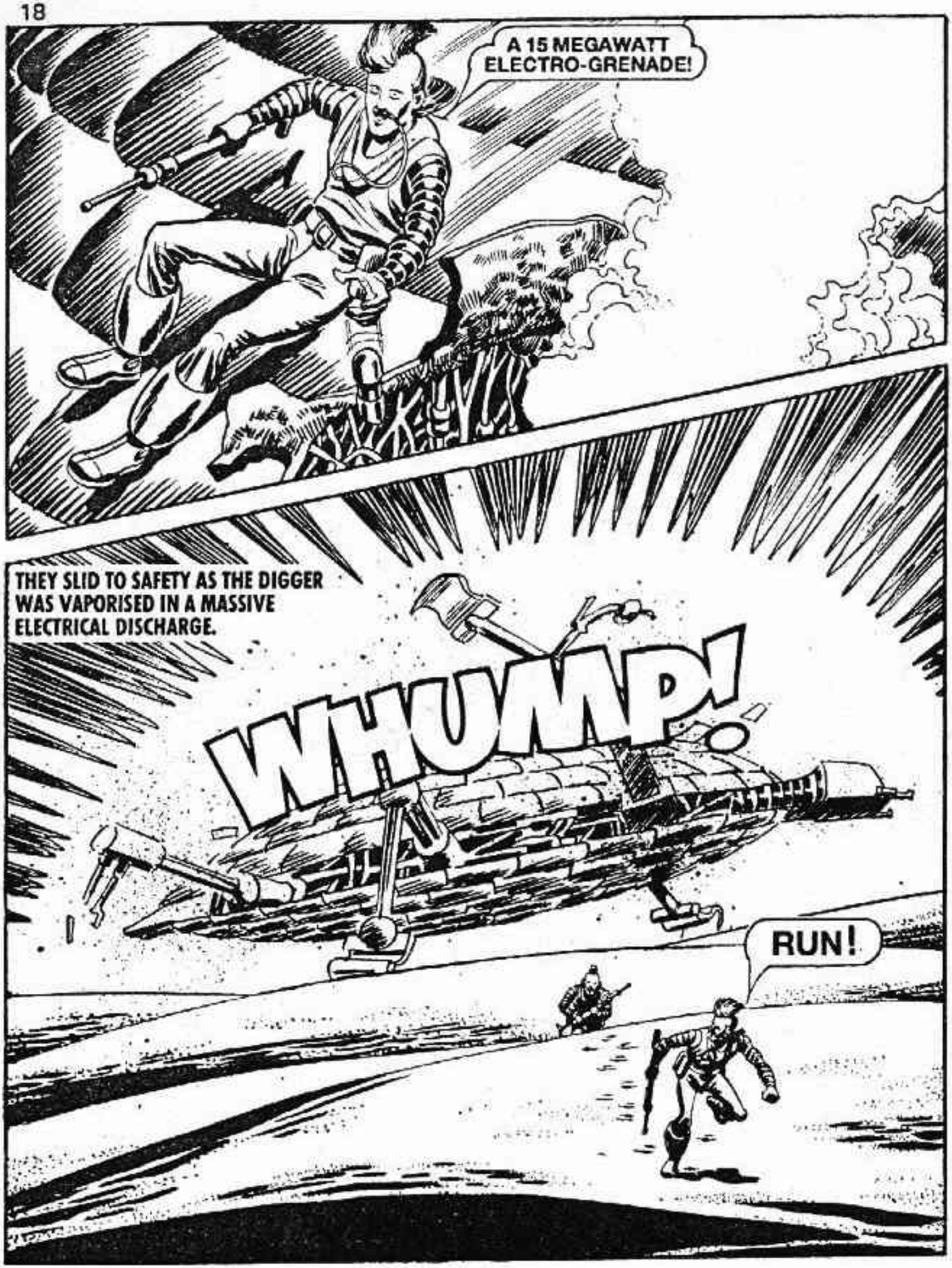

THE UNSUSPECTING ZORIANS APPROACHED.
THE TROOPERS LEAPT FROM COVER—
A ONE WAY TICKET, ZORIAN SCUM?

LET'S GET OUT OF HERE! THERE MAY BE MORE PATROLS NEARBY.

AS THEY MOVED ON TOWARDS THE SITE OF THE WRECKAGE, THE SAND BENEATH THEIR FEET BEGAN TO MOVE.
WHAA?


THE GROUND HEAVED—
A DIGGER!
HANG ON!
THE DIGGER WAS IN FACT A SUBTERRANEAN ZORIAN FIGHTING MACHINE.


HIDDEN ON TOP OF THE DIGGER, THE TROOPERS WATCHED—
THE CREW ARE COMING OUT!
WE'VE BEEN SPOTTED!
SLIDE DOWN THE FAR SIDE! IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE!
LOOK! IT'S BEEN DAMAGED.
THEY MUST HAVE SURFACED FOR REPAIRS.


A 15 MEGAWATT ELECTRO-GRENADE!
THEY SLID TO SAFETY AS THE DIGGER WAS VAPORISED IN A MASSIVE ELECTRICAL DISCHARGE.
WHUMP!
RUN!

THAT FINISHES IT!
LATER —
RUMBLE
THERE'S THE WRECKAGE!
AND THERE'S TROUBLE!

THE TROUBLE WAS A HUGE CONVOY OF ZORIAN VEHICLES WHICH RUMBLED ACROSS THE PLAIN.
THERE'S HUNDREDS OF THEM.
WE'LL HAVE TO HURRY OR WE'LL MISS OUR RENDEZVOUS.

THE TROOPERS LEAPT FORWARD —
THE DUST WILL HIDE US.
THEY CUT BETWEEN THE ZORIAN MACHINES.
REACHING THE WRECKAGE OF THE MARK IV MACHINE, THEY SEARCHED FOR THE PYXITE CHIP.
HURRY!

AL FOUND THE PYXITE CHIP EASILY.
GOT IT! A BIT TOO EASILY, I THINK.
SOMETHING'S COMING — GET DOWN!
WE'LL HITCH A LIFT.
THE VEHICLE WAS A CREWLESS GUNCRAFT.

QUICKEST WAY TO OUR RENDEZVOUS WITH THE EMPIRE SHUTTLE!
THEY REACHED THE END OF THE OPEN PLAIN.
JUMP CLEAR AT THOSE ROCKS.

WE'LL JUST MAKE IT IN TIME.
THANKS FOR THE RIDE.
THEY REACHED THE RENDEZVOUS POINT.
SOMETHING'S UP THERE! COULD BE A ZORIAN FIGHTER.
NO! IT'S OUR SHUTTLE.

AS THE SHUTTLE CAME IN TO LAND.
IT'S HIT!
IT'S GONE!
IT'S A TRIT, AND HE MEANS BUSINESS!
TRITS WERE TRITIUM FIGHTERS, ZORIAN LONG-RANGE CRAFT POWERED BY INTERSTELLAR HYDROGEN.

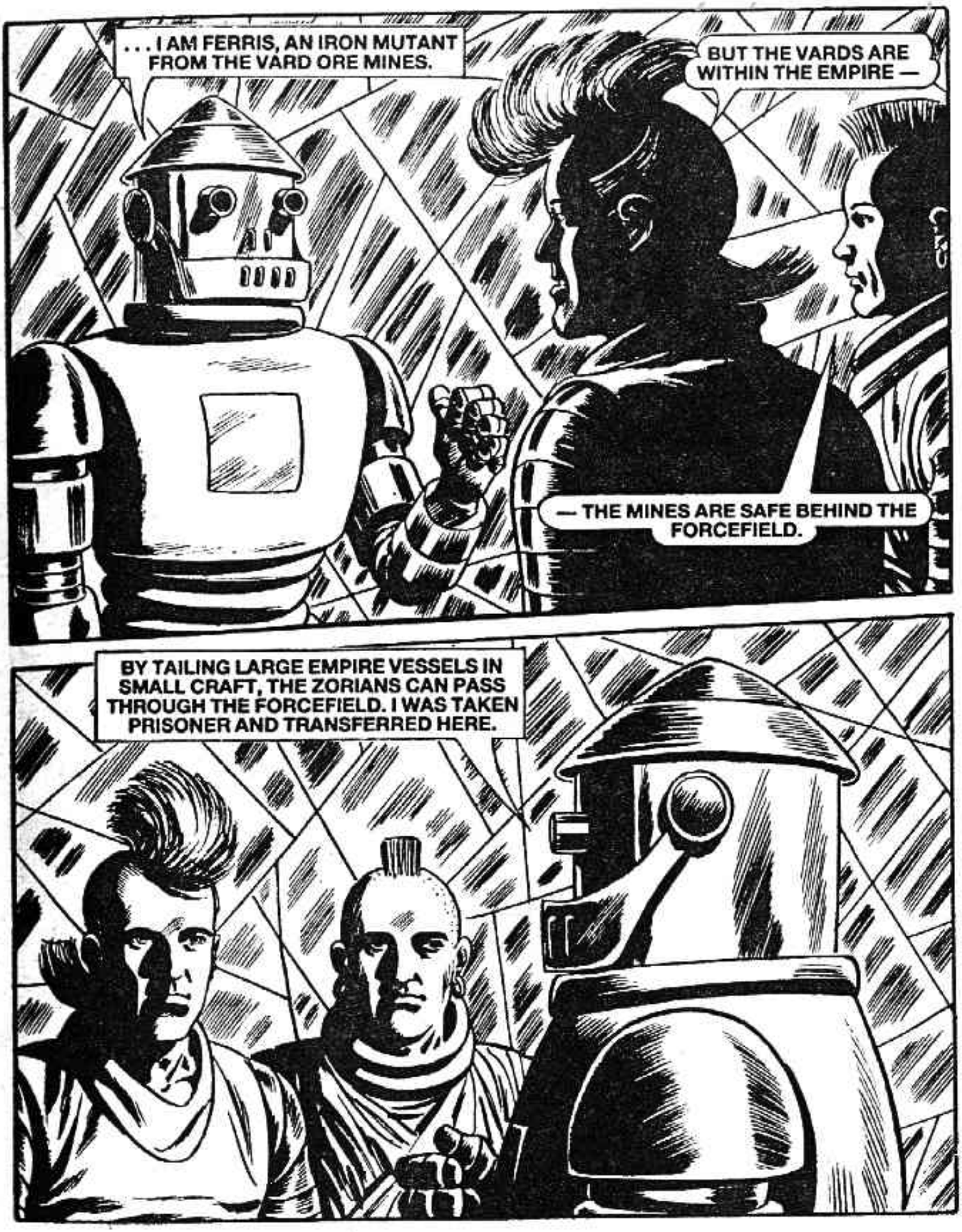
SUDDENLY —
WHOOSH!
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
A TRACTOR BEAM!
THEY WERE PULLED TOWARDS A ZORIAN BATTLECRUISER.

ON BOARD THE BATTLECRUISER —
WE HAVE THE EARTHMEN, CAPTAIN.
SEARCH THEM!
HURRY!
FIRST THE FIGHT IS BEATEN OUT OF YOU!

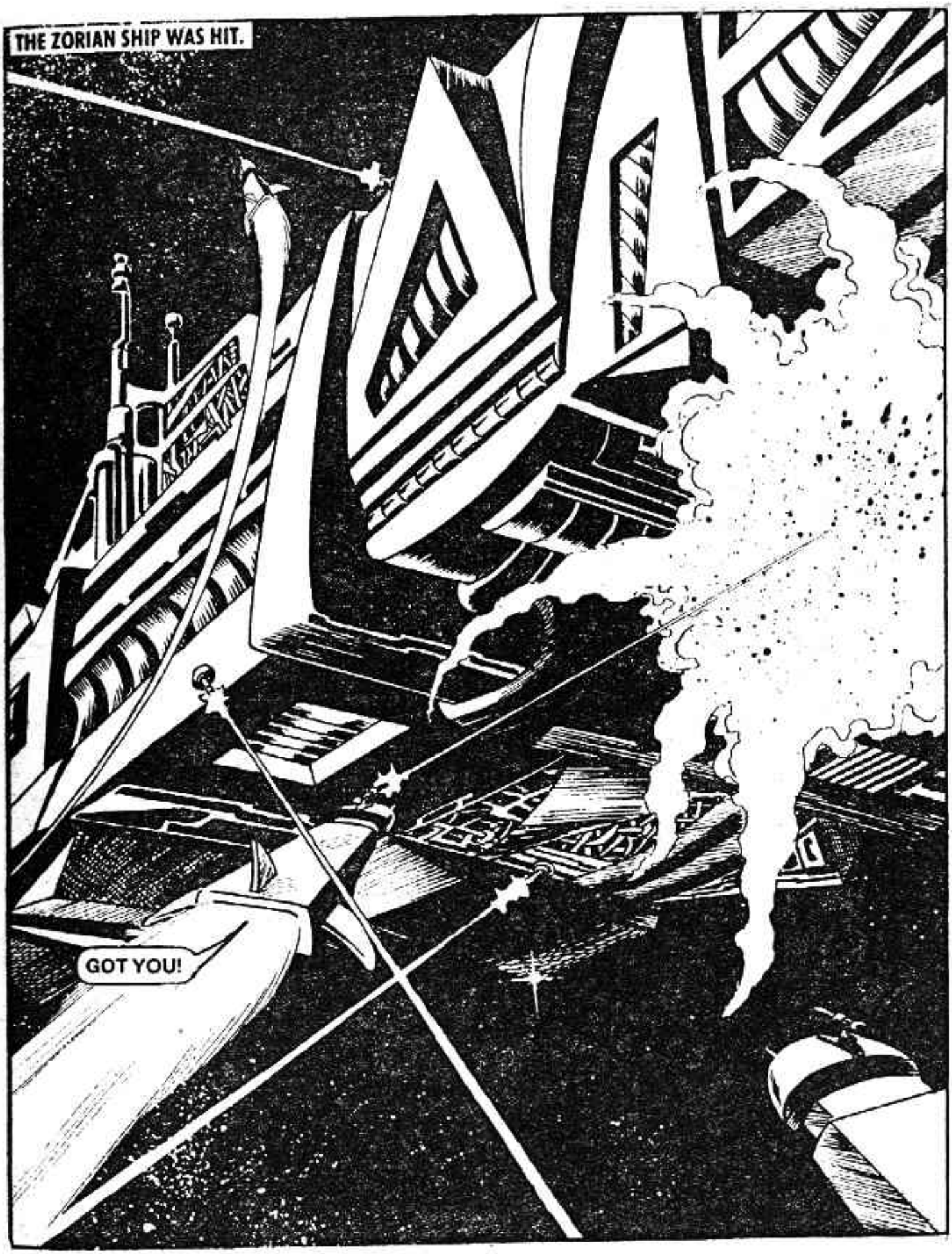
THEY'VE FOUND IT.

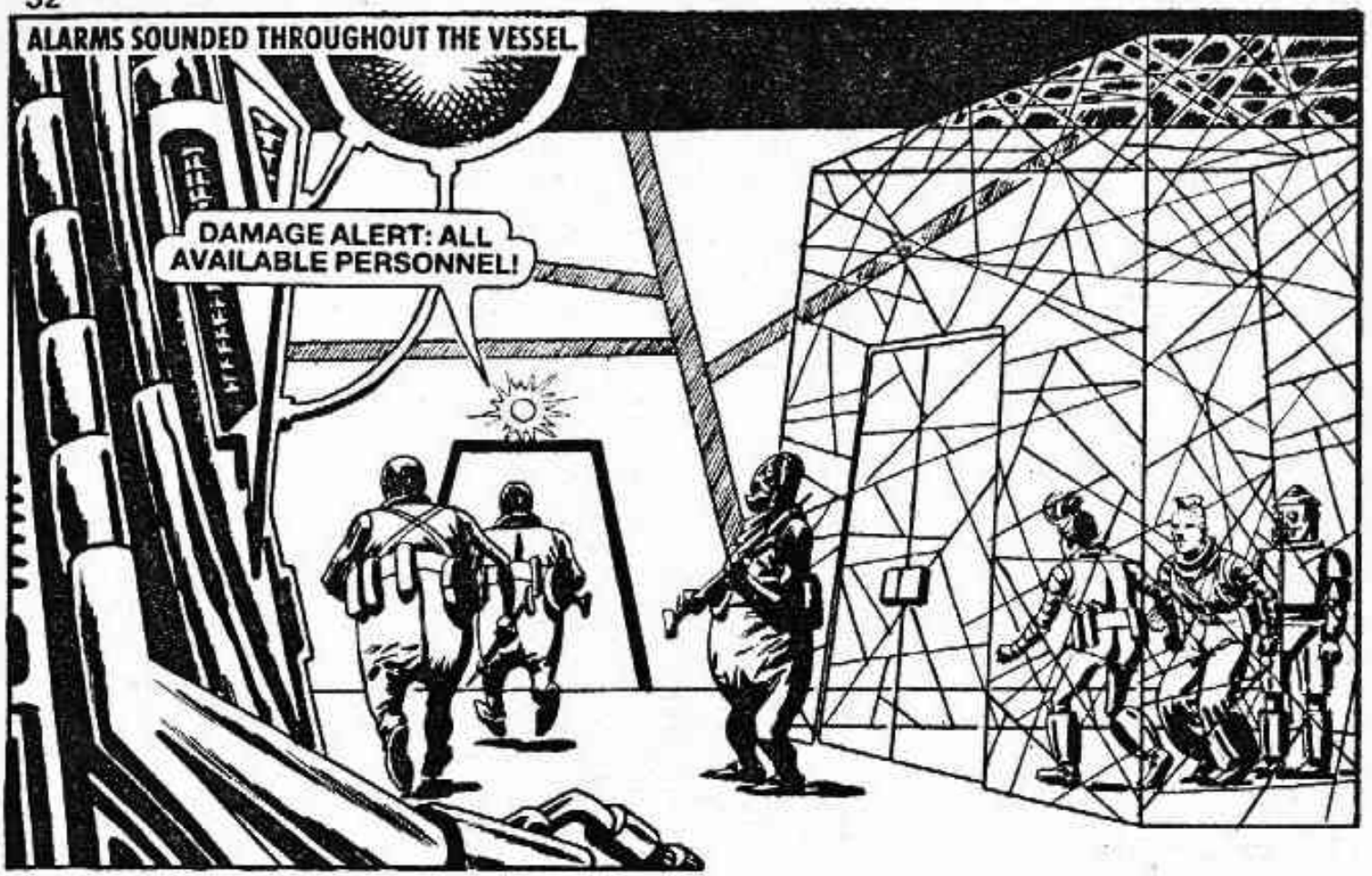
UNTIL YOU CAME LOOKING FOR THIS, WE HAD FAILED TO SEE THEIR IMPORTANCE. BUT MONITORING OF YOU TWO HAS GIVEN US MUCH INFORMATION. TAKE THEM AWAY.

THERE WAS ANOTHER PRISONER IN DETENTION.
GET INSIDE, EARTHERS!
GREETINGS, EARTHMEN . . . COMPANY AT LAST.

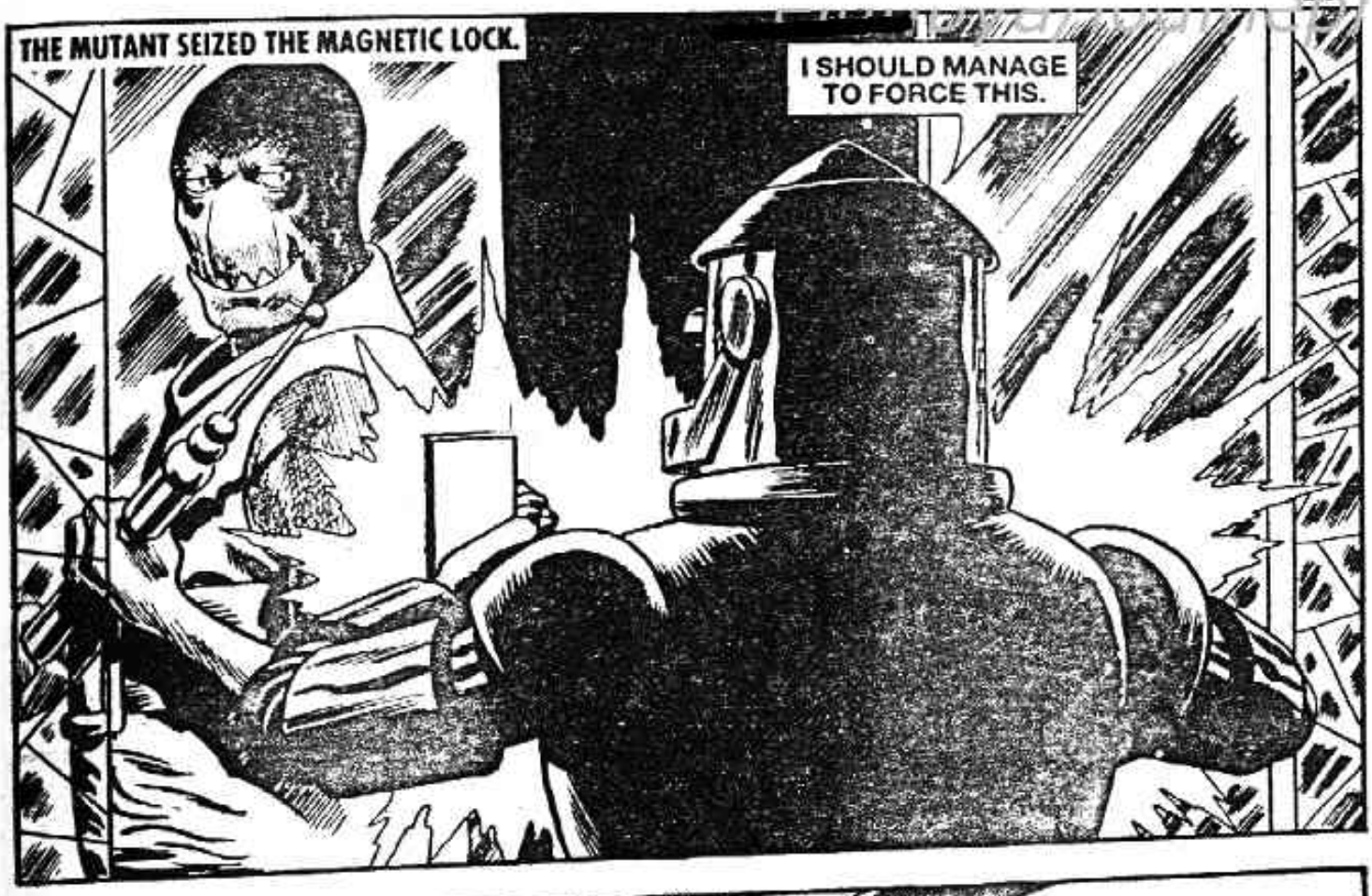

. . . I AM FERRIS, AN IRON MUTANT FROM THE VARD ORE MINES.
BUT THE VARDS ARE WITHIN THE EMPIRE —
— THE MINES ARE SAFE BEHIND THE FORCEFIELD.
BY TAILING LARGE EMPIRE VESSELS IN SMALL CRAFT, THE ZORIANS CAN PASS THROUGH THE FORCEFIELD. I WAS TAKEN PRISONER AND TRANSFERRED HERE.

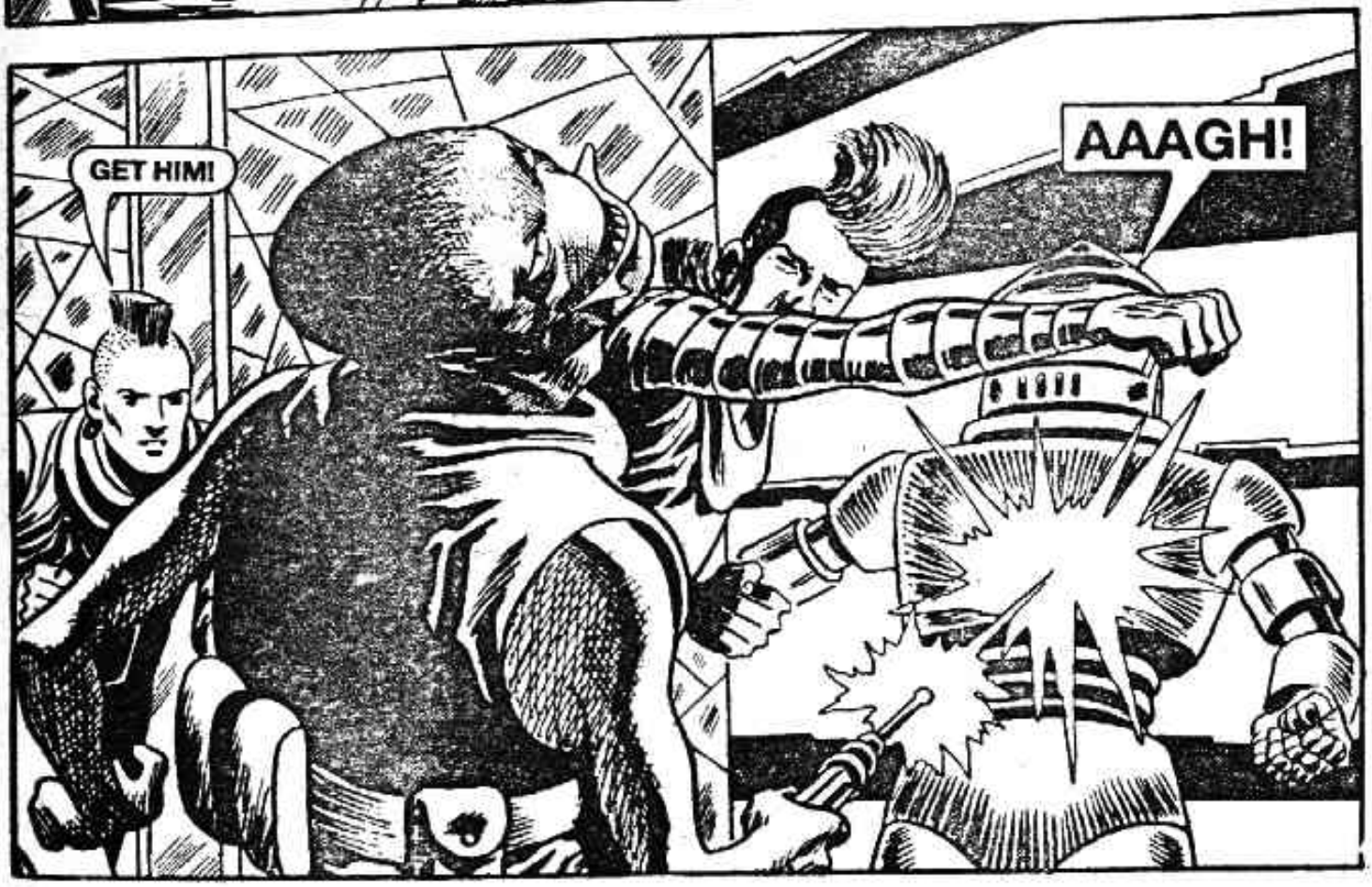
IF THE ZORIANS HAVE PENETRATED OUR FORCEFIELD, EARTH MUST BE INFORMED.
WE MUST ESCAPE!
NEVER FEAR! I WILL GET US OUT!
MEANWHILE —
EMPIRE VESSEL APPROACHING FORCEFIELD. PREPARE TO LAUNCH SPY SHIP.
EMPIRE FIGHTERS — WE'RE UNDER ATTACK!
THE EMPIRE FIGHTERS HIT HARD —


THE ZORIAN SHIP WAS HIT.
GOT YOU!


ALARMS SOUNDED THROUGHOUT THE VESSEL.
DAMAGE ALERT: ALL AVAILABLE PERSONNEL!

A FIRE! HOW VERY CONVENIENT — I THINK WE HAVE A WAY OUT.


THE MUTANT SEIZED THE MAGNETIC LOCK.
I SHOULD MANAGE TO FORCE THIS.


GET HIM!
AAAGH!

HE'S BEEN TERMINATED?
I'LL TAKE THE BLASTER — LET'S GO.
SPY SHIP LAUNCH IMMINENT. CLEAR LAUNCH AREA.
SPY SHIP? IT COULD BE GOING THROUGH THE FORCEFIELD. OUR TICKET BACK TO THE EMPIRE!

THE PRISONERS!
DIE, EARTH . . .

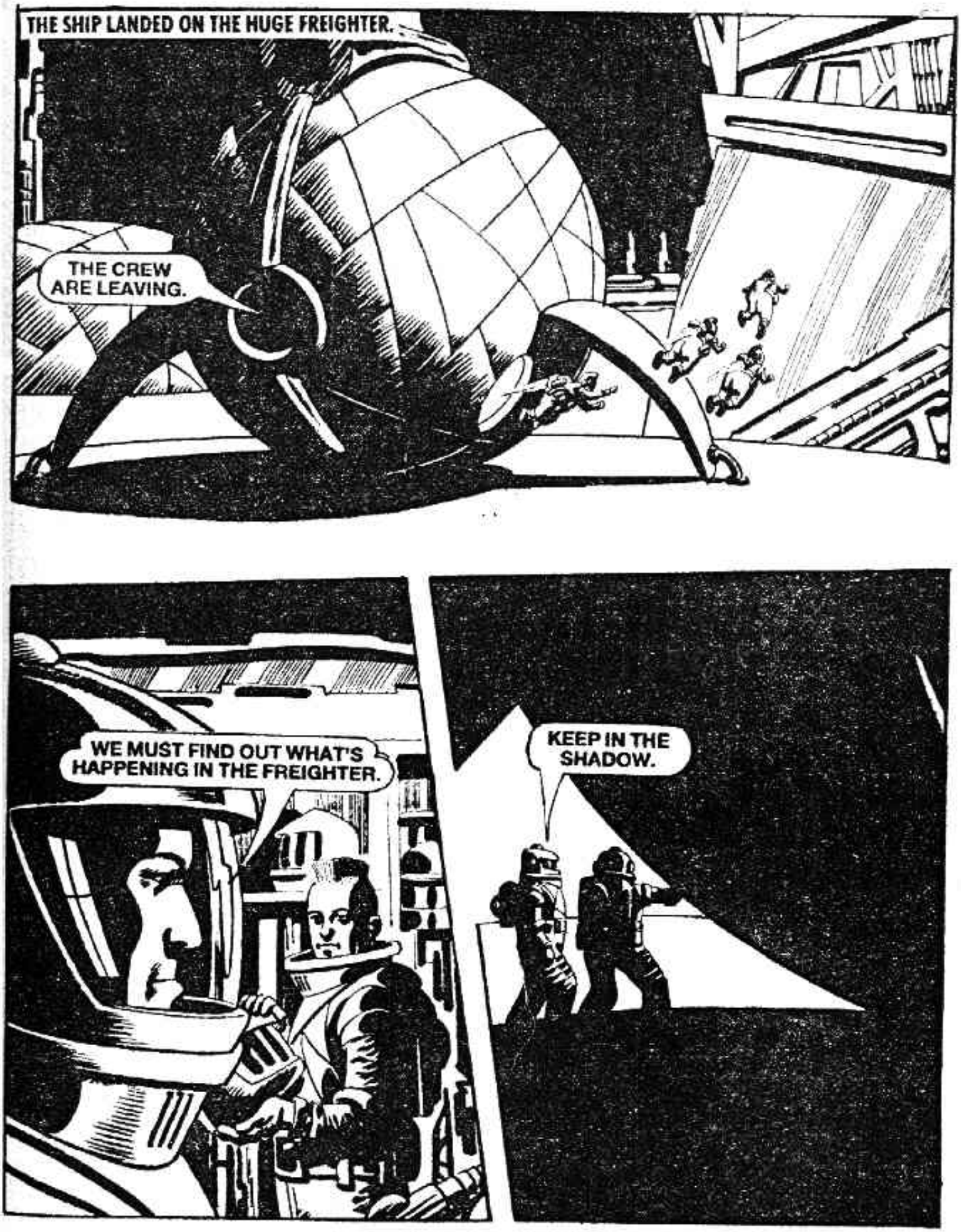
COME ON — IT COULD TAKE OFF ANY MOMENT!
THEY REACHED THE LAUNCH AREA.
GET INSIDE FAST OR WE'LL BE ROASTED!

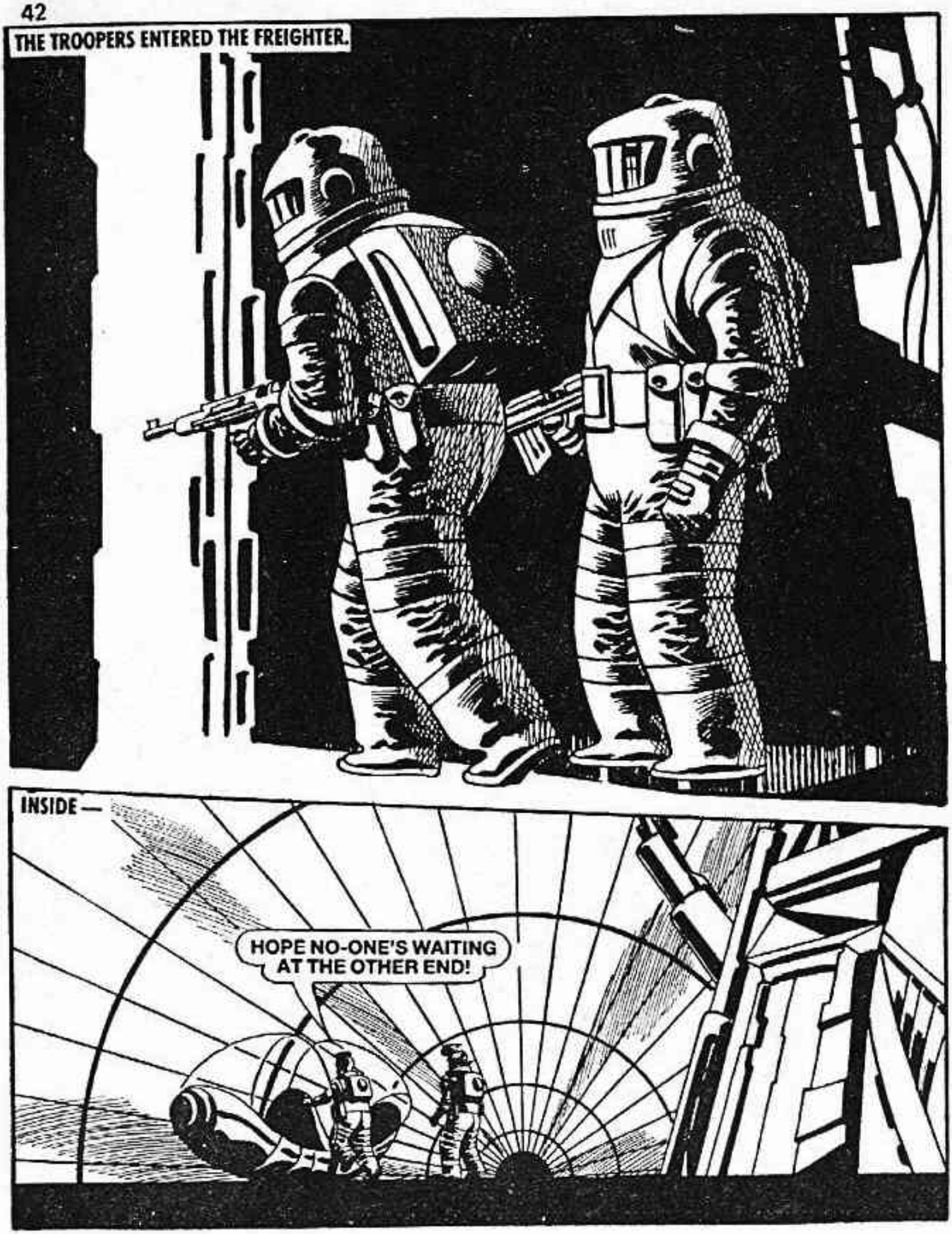
MADE IT!
THE SHIP BLASTED OFF.

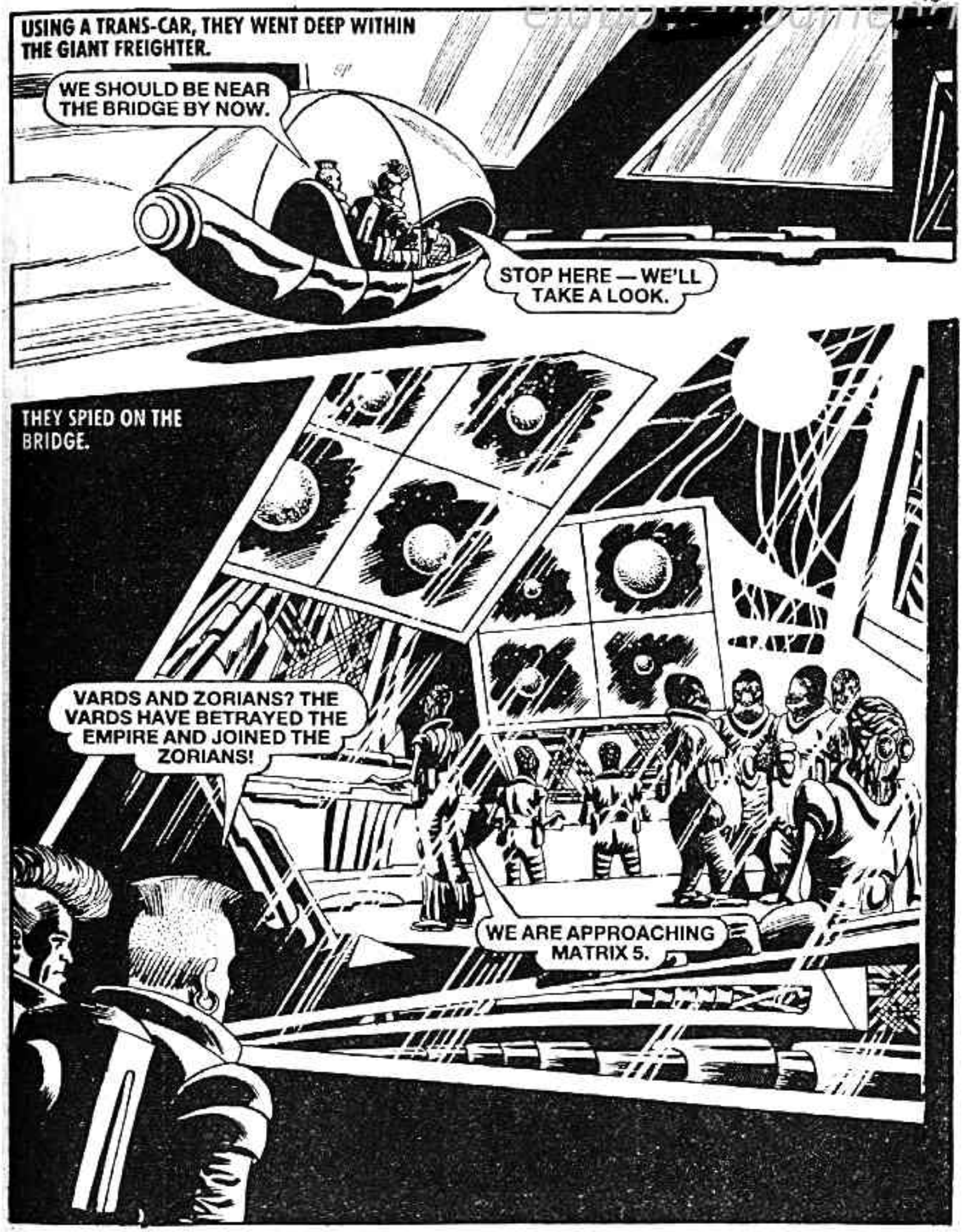
AN EMPIRE FIGHTER CLOSED IN.
I HOPE WE'VE A GOOD PILOT!
THE SHIP TOOK EVASIVE ACTION.
THE FIGHTER'S BEEN HIT — POOR DEVIL.

FREE OF PURSUIT, THE SHIP LOCATED THE EMPIRE SUPPLY VESSEL . . .
. . . AND USED IT TO PASS THROUGH THE EMPIRE FORCEFIELD.
LOOK WHAT'S AHEAD!

A VARD ORE FREIGHTER!


THE SHIP LANDED ON THE HUGE FREIGHTER.
THE CREW ARE LEAVING.
WE MUST FIND OUT WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE FREIGHTER.
KEEP IN THE SHADOW.


THE TROOPERS ENTERED THE FREIGHTER.
INSIDE —
HOPE NO-ONE'S WAITING AT THE OTHER END!


USING A TRANS-CAR, THEY WENT DEEP WITHIN THE GIANT FREIGHTER.
WE SHOULD BE NEAR THE BRIDGE BY NOW.
STOP HERE — WE'LL TAKE A LOOK.
THEY SPIED ON THE BRIDGE.
VARDS AND ZORIANS? THE VARDS HAVE BETRAYED THE EMPIRE AND JOINED THE ZORIANS!
WE ARE APPROACHING MATRIX 5.

THE ZORIANS MUST HAVE BRIBED THE BARDS INTO TURNING TRAITOR.
SO WE KNOW WHERE THE WARCHARIOTS CAME FROM . . .
. . . THE VARD FACTORIES ON MATRIX 5!
FREEZE, EARTHERS!

BUT THE TWO BLASTED AWAY ON JET PACKS.
STOP THEM!
BACK TO THE ZORIAN SHIP!
STOP THEM TAKING OFF!

THE TROOPERS ESCAPED.
MADE IT!
WE'RE LOW ON FUEL! WE'LL HAVE TO LAND ON MATRIX 5!

THE VESSEL HEADED FOR THE PLANET'S SURFACE.
THEY LANDED IN A REMOTE SPOT ON MATRIX 5.
IF WE SABOTAGE THE CONTROL CENTRE FOR THE WARCHARIOTS, WE CAN BUY SOME TIME FOR THE EMPIRE . . .
. . . TIME FOR US TO WARN EARTH OF THE VARDS' TREACHERY.

THE TROOPERS REACHED THE VARD FACTORIES.
LET'S TAKE A LOOK.

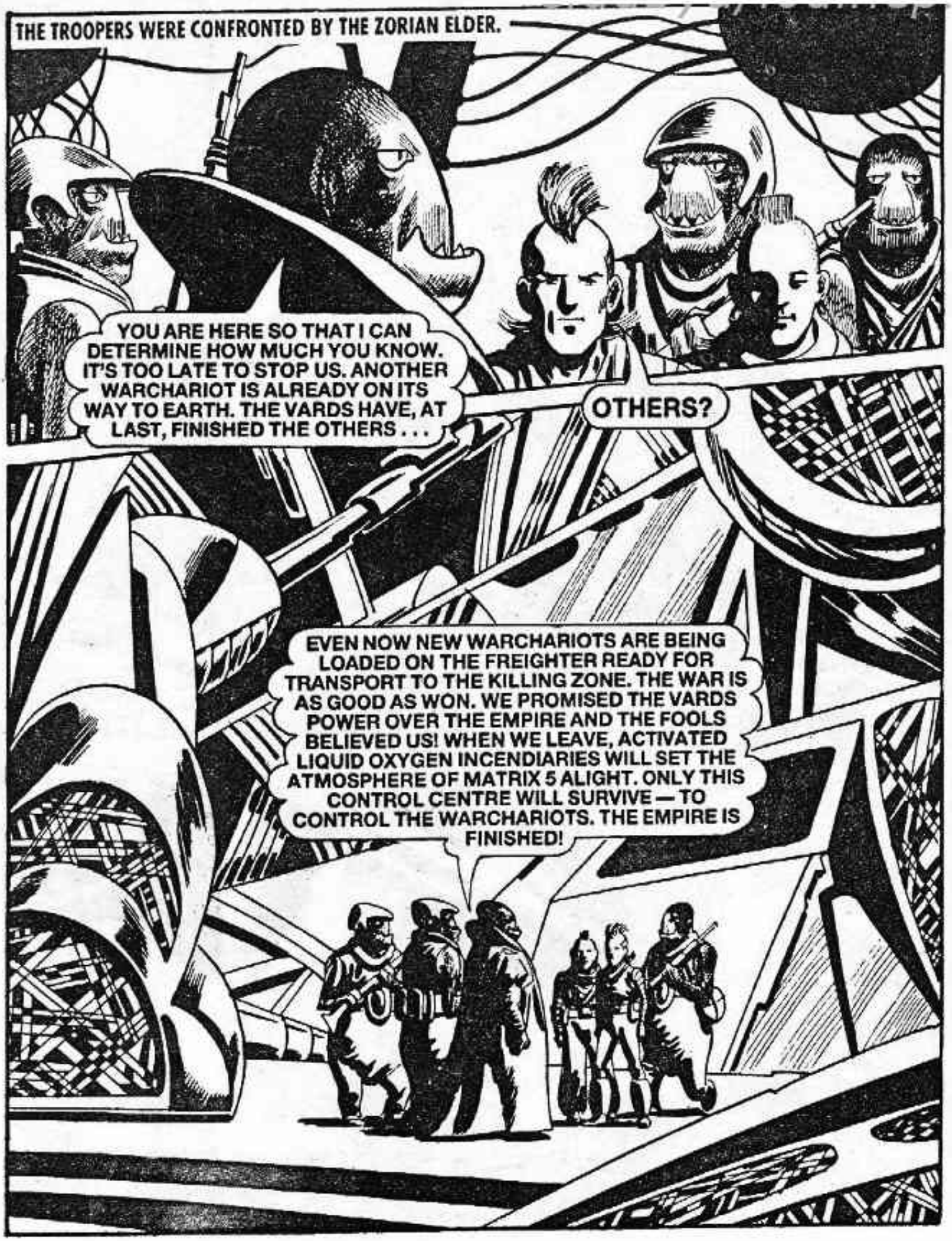
A PASSING ORE-CARRIER PROVED HANDY —
THIS IS PYXITE ORE? THE VARDS LIED ABOUT RUNNING OUT.
INSIDE THE FACTORY —
A REPLACEMENT FOR THE ONE ON EARTH?
ANOTHER WARCHARIOT!
COMMENCING FREIGHTER LOADING.
MEANWHILE, IN A SUBTERRANEAN CONTROL CENTRE ELSEWHERE ON MATRIX 5.
ELDER — INTRUDERS IN UNIT GREEN 71

THE EARTHERS FROM THE FREIGHTER — SUMMON GUARDS!

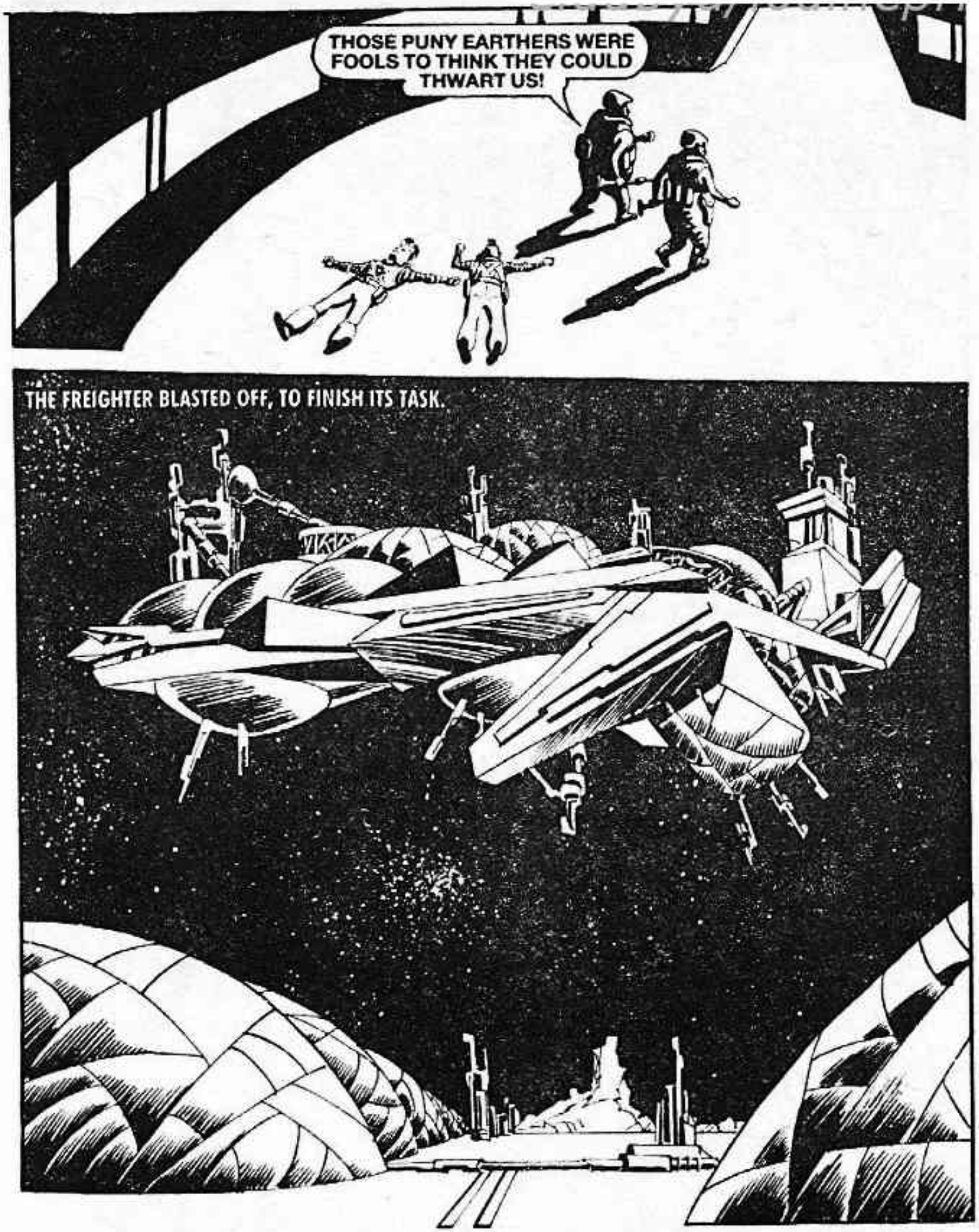
THE CONTROL CENTRE SENSORS PIN-POINTED THE EARTHMEN.
KILL THEM!

HIT THE LIGHTS!
IN THE ZORIAN-MANNED CONTROL CENTRE—
THE VARDS WILL NEVER HOLD THEM. WHERE ARE OUR GUARDS?

THEY AREN'T WELL-TRAINED.
BUT THE PAIR WERE TRAPPED.
WE STILL HAVE A CHANCE—
CORRECTION, EARTHER — YOU HAVE NO CHANCE.
THEY WERE TAKEN TO THE ZORIAN COMMAND BUILDING.


THE TROOPERS WERE CONFRONTED BY THE ZORIAN ELDER.
YOU ARE HERE SO THAT I CAN DETERMINE HOW MUCH YOU KNOW. IT'S TOO LATE TO STOP US. ANOTHER WARCHARIOT IS ALREADY ON ITS WAY TO EARTH. THE VARDS HAVE, AT LAST, FINISHED THE OTHERS . . .
OTHERS?
EVEN NOW NEW WARCHARIOTS ARE BEING LOADED ON THE FREIGHTER READY FOR TRANSPORT TO THE KILLING ZONE. THE WAR IS AS GOOD AS WON. WE PROMISED THE VARDS POWER OVER THE EMPIRE AND THE FOOLS BELIEVED US! WHEN WE LEAVE, ACTIVATED LIQUID OXYGEN INCENDIARIES WILL SET THE ATMOSPHERE OF MATRIX 5 ALIGHT. ONLY THIS CONTROL CENTRE WILL SURVIVE — TO CONTROL THE WARCHARIOTS. THE EMPIRE IS FINISHED!

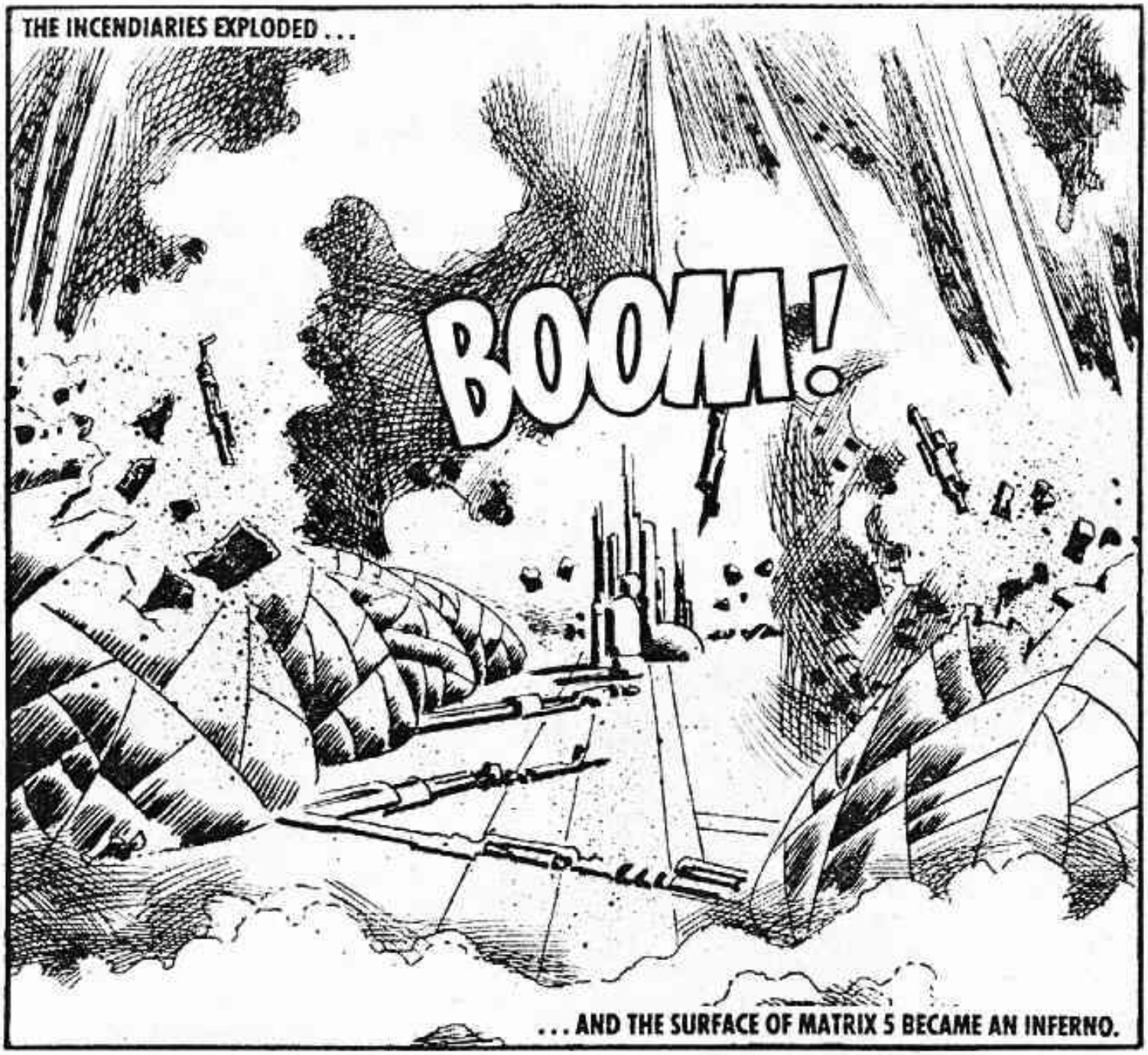
THE ZORIANS PREPARED TO LEAVE.
LOADING COMPLETE!
COMMENCE ZORIAN EVACUATION. EXECUTE THEM!
GOODBYE!


THOSE PUNY EARTHERS WERE FOOLS TO THINK THEY COULD THWART US!
THE FREIGHTER BLASTED OFF, TO FINISH ITS TASK.

BUT EVEN AS THE ZORIANS LEFT, AL STIRRED, PROTECTED BY HIS ENERGY ABSORBING ARMOUR.
OOOH . . . JUPE!

ON BOARD THE FREIGHTER.
EVEN AS THEY RECOVERED, THE DOOR SEALING THE CONTROL CENTRE BEGAN TO CLOSE.
WE'LL GET INCINERATED HERE ANY SECOND — UNLESS WE REACH SAFETY BEHIND THAT DOOR!
IN THAT CASE — RUN!
WE'RE CLEAR OF THE ATMOSPHERE.
ORDER CONTROL ROOM PERSONNEL TO DETONATE LOX INCENDIARIES!

MADE IT!


THE INCENDIARIES EXPLODED . . .
BOOM!
. . . AND THE SURFACE OF MATRIX 5 BECAME AN INFERNO.

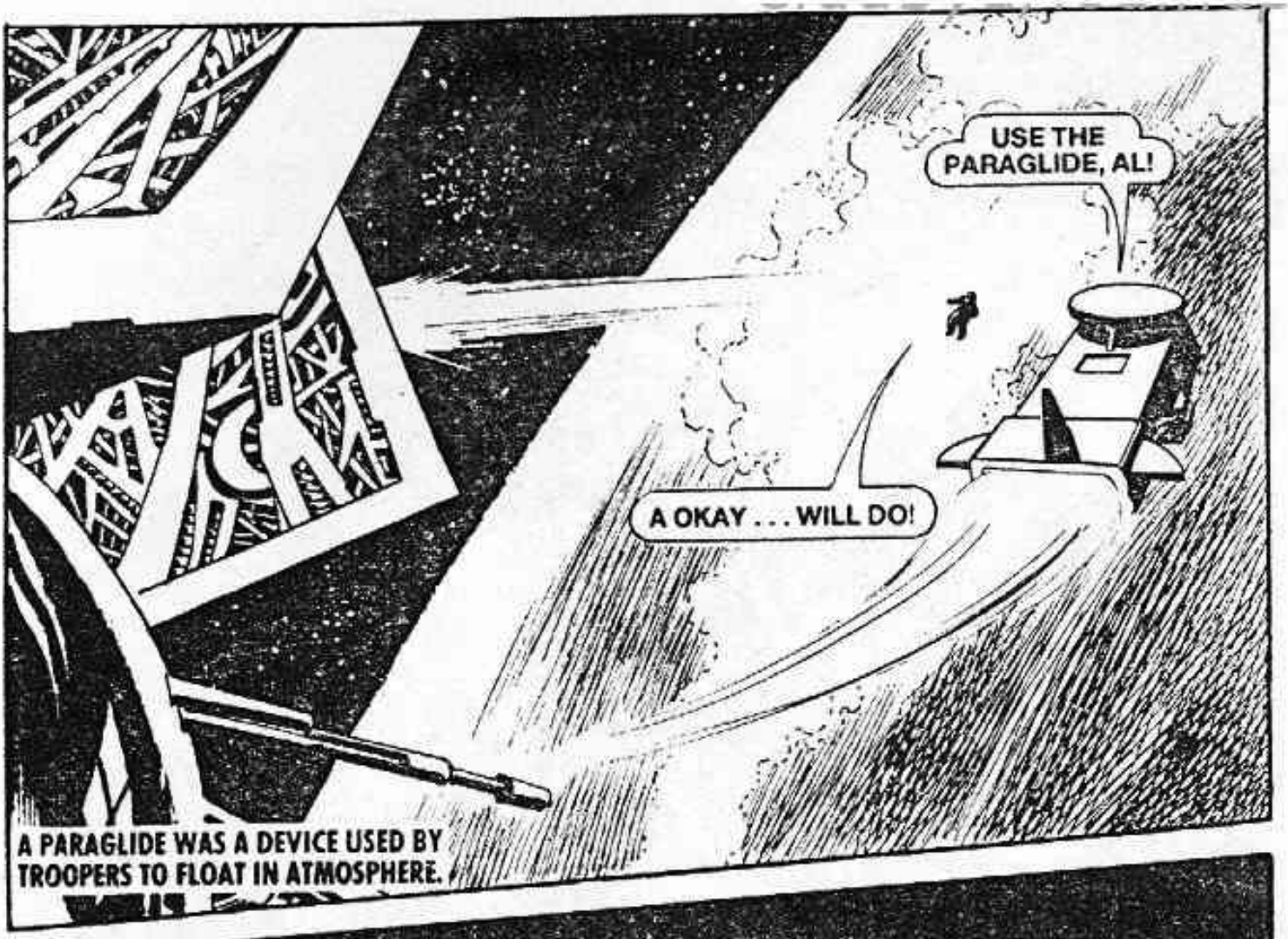
NOTHING CAN STOP US NOW!
SAFE FROM THE INFERNO IN THE CONTROL CENTRE, THE TWO TROOPERS DEALT WITH THE REMAINING ZORIANS.
SURPRISE! BET YOU DIDN'T EXPECT TO SEE US AGAIN!

WE'RE TOO LATE! THERE ISN'T A FIGHTER LEFT TO STOP THE FREIGHTER.
NO . . . BUT THERE'S A SHUTTLE!
AL EXPLAINED HIS DESPERATE PLAN—
IF WE CAN RUPTURE THE FREIGHTER'S HULL BEFORE IT LEAVES THE ATMOSPHERE, IT'LL DEPRESSURISE AND THE CARGO WILL MOVE. ONCE THAT HAPPENS THE CRAFT WILL BECOME UNSTABLE AND CRASH.

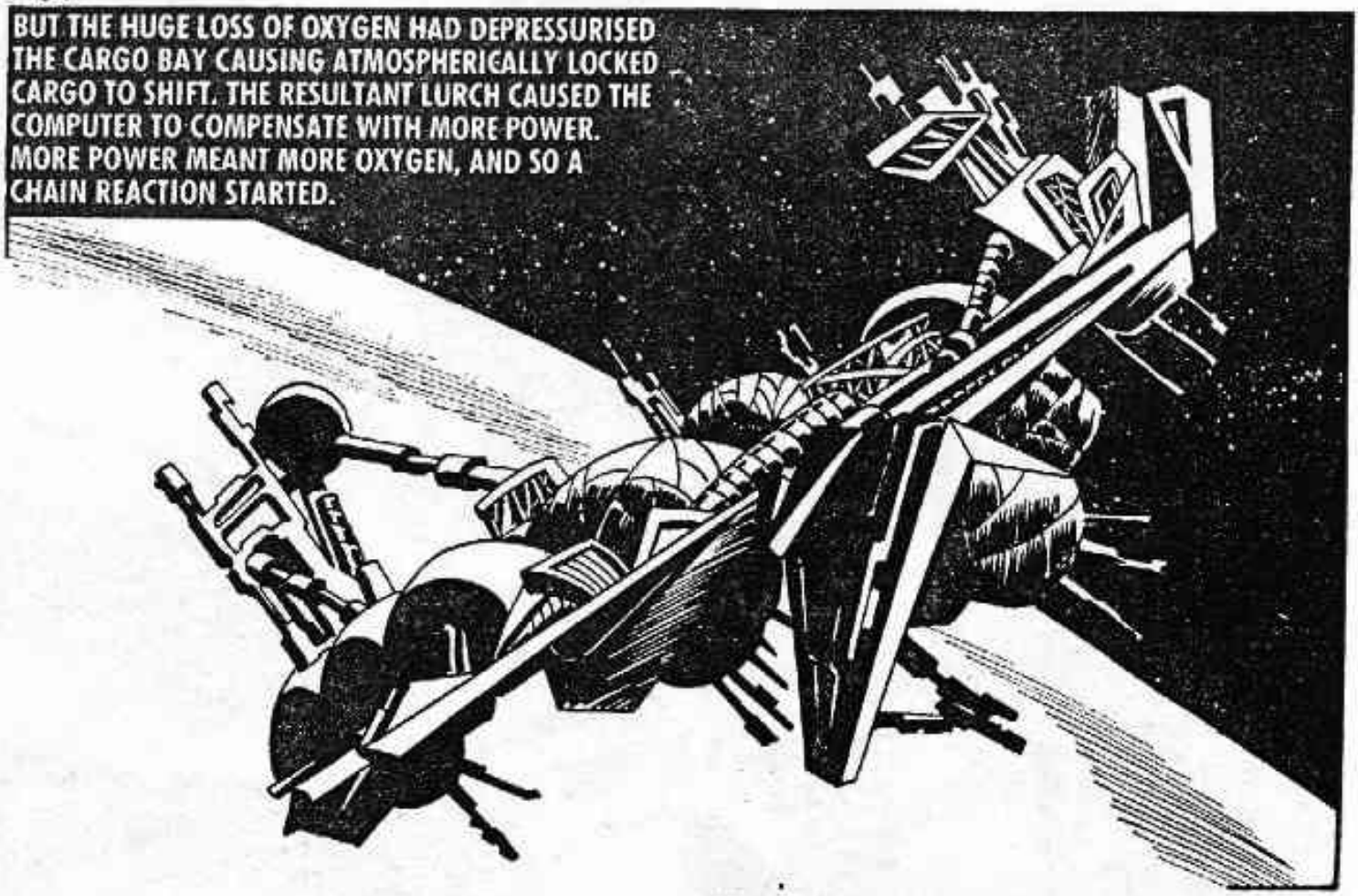
THE CUMBERSOME FREIGHTER WAS CLIMBING SLOWLY IN THE UPPER ATMOSPHERE.
NOW ALL I HAVE TO DO IS FORCE THIS DISTRESS HARPOON THROUGH THE FREIGHTER'S HULL.
DIFFICULT . . . THAT'S NOT WHAT DISTRESS HARPOONS WERE DESIGNED FOR.
DISTRESS HARPOONS WERE HAND-LAUNCHED MISSILES INTENDED TO SECURE LIFEBOATS TO ASTEROIDS, BY MEANS OF A TITANIUM LINE.

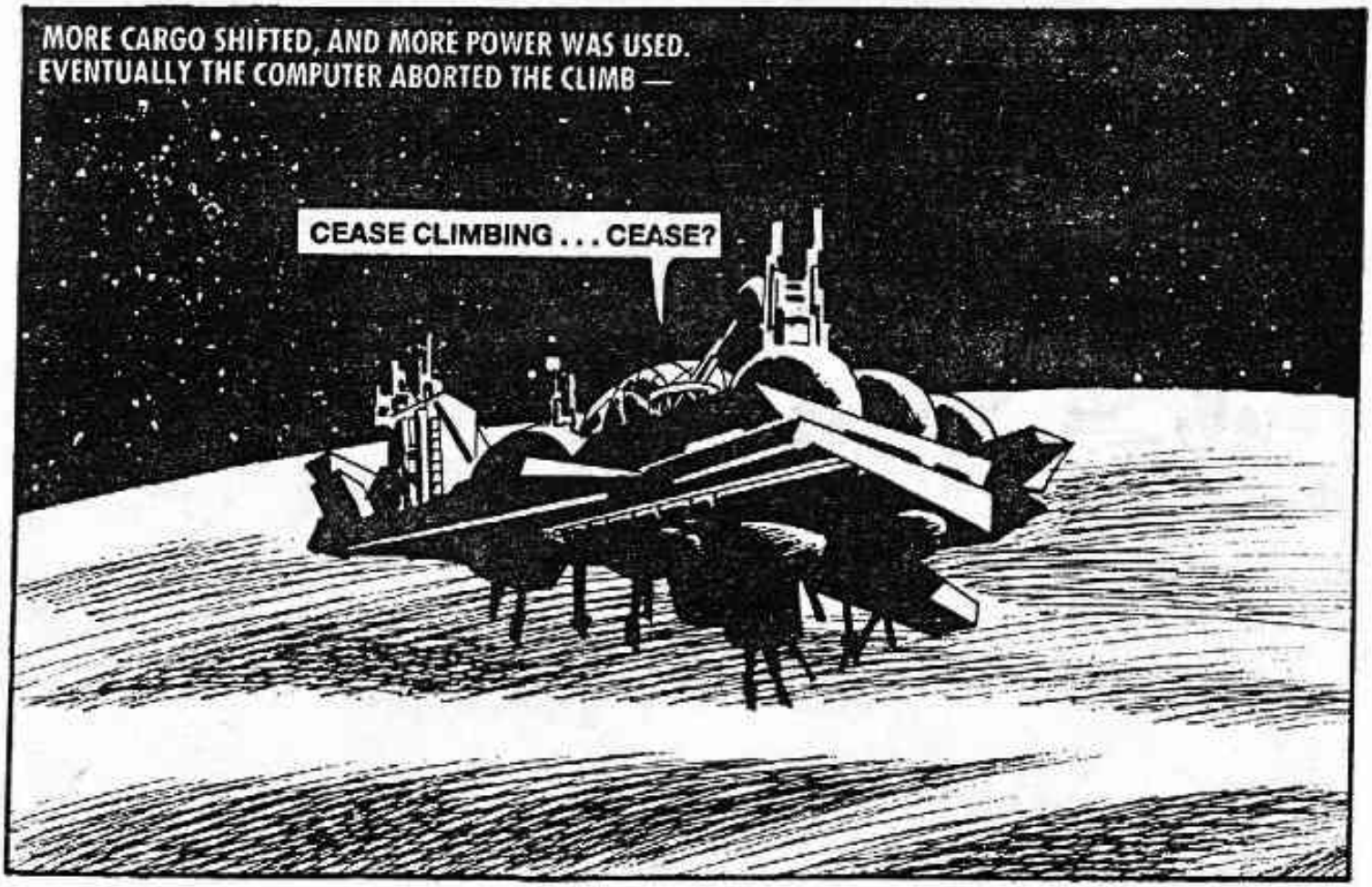
AL HAD TO LAUNCH THE HARPOON ACCURATELY, SO HE DECIDED TO STAND ON THE BOW OF THE CRAFT LIKE AN OLD TIME WHALER.
YOU'RE CRAZY!
YEP! BUT THAT'S BETTER THAN BEING DEAD.
AL AIMED FOR THE JUNCTION OF THE CARGO AREA AND CREW QUARTERS, WHERE HE COULD SEE THE OXY-REPLENISHMENT VALVES.
3...2...

. . . 1!
AL'S THROW WAS SPOT ON . . . AND A JET OF ESCAPING OXYGEN TUMBLED HIM INTO SPACE.
ZIP
HIT . . . AAAAH!


USE THE PARAGLIDE, AL!
A OKAY . . . WILL DO!
A PARAGLIDE WAS A DEVICE USED BY TROOPERS TO FLOAT IN ATMOSPHERE.

ON THE BRIDGE—
MALFUNCTION . . . AUTOCOMPENSATE.

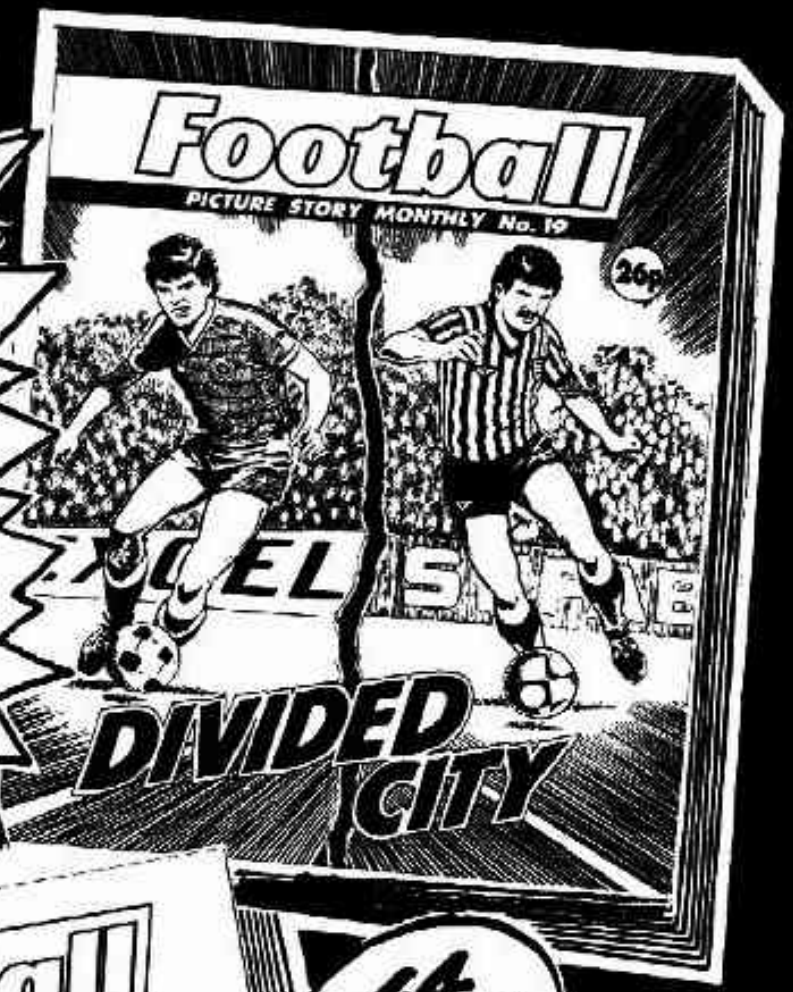

BUT THE HUGE LOSS OF OXYGEN HAD DEPRESSURISED THE CARGO BAY CAUSING ATMOSPHERICALLY LOCKED CARGO TO SHIFT. THE RESULTANT LURCH CAUSED THE COMPUTER TO COMPENSATE WITH MORE POWER. MORE POWER MEANT MORE OXYGEN, AND SO A CHAIN REACTION STARTED.


MORE CARGO SHIFTED, AND MORE POWER WAS USED. EVENTUALLY THE COMPUTER ABORTED THE CLIMB —
CEASE CLIMBING . . . CEASE?

BUT THE HUGE MASS OF THE MOVING WARCHARIOTS CAUSED INSTABILITY AND THE FREIGHTER WENT OUT OF CONTROL.
THE FREIGHTER PLUNGED TO THE SURFACE—
IT'S GONE!

Printed and Published in Great Britain by D. C. THOMSON & CO., LTD.,
185 Fleet Street, London EC4A 2HS. © D. C. THOMSON & CO., LTD., 1987.

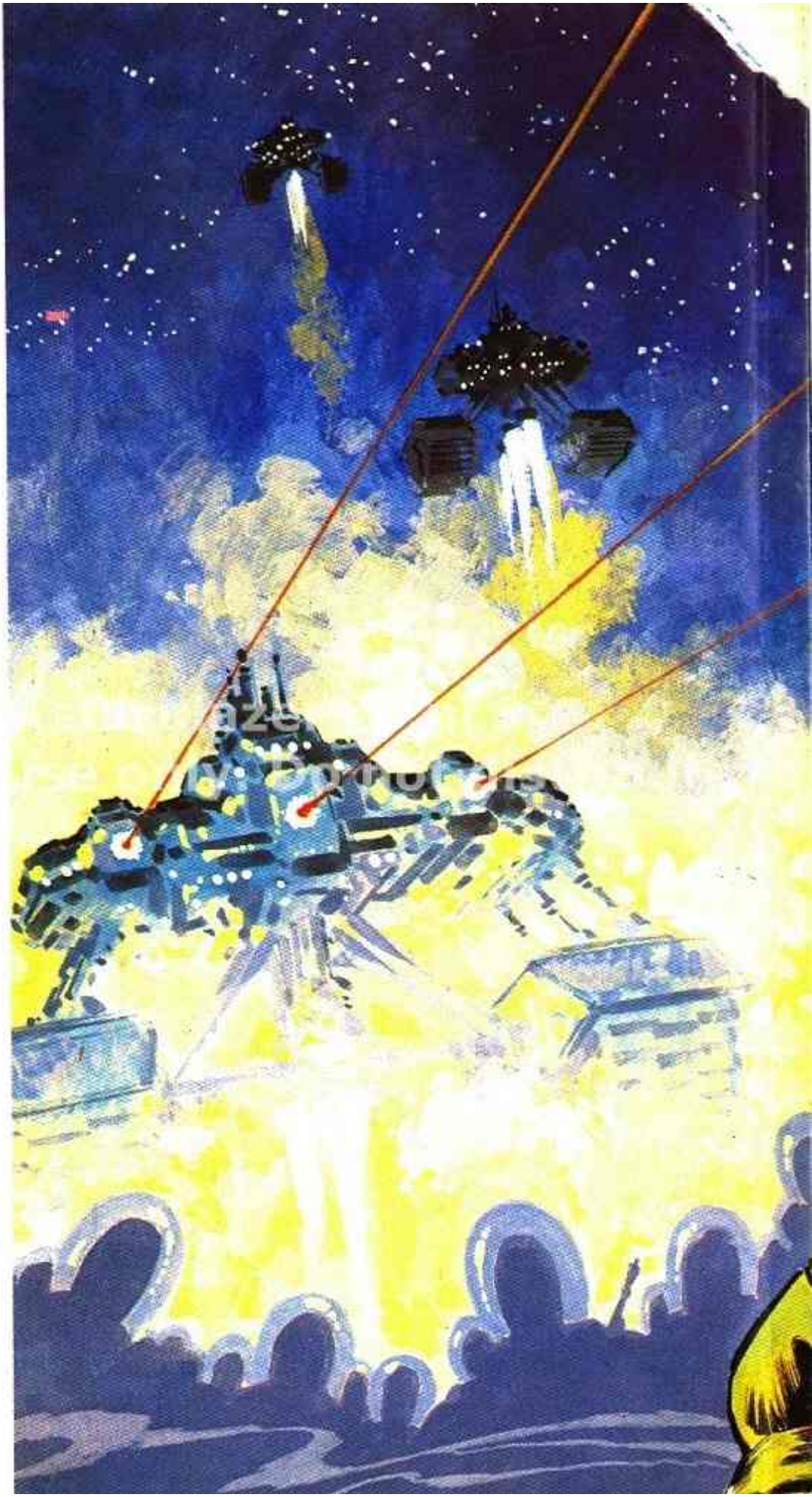
TWO GREAT FOOTBALL PICTURE STORY LIBRARIES EVERY MONTH!



64 PAGES EACH

PLUS A FULL COLOUR MINI PIN-UP... ...AND A PAGE OF FOOTBALL FUNNIES... IN EVERY ISSUE!

NOW ON SALE 26p

THE KILLING ZONE

More than half the Galaxy was under the control of the Earth Empire. The rest fell under the domination of the murderously evil Zorian nation, who wanted to control all the Galaxy. Earth wouldn't yield, so the buffer area between the Empires, Acamar, became a battlefield — it was more than a battlefield. It was a KILLING ZONE.